

States of precarity:  
Negotiating home(s) beyond detention

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Signed .....

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In the second quarter of 2013, 7,944 people were detained in the UK 'for the purposes of immigration control' (Home Office, 2013). While 1,138 of those detained were women, major shortcomings are identified in their treatment and calls made for a more gender sensitive asylum system. Although 35% of these women went on to be released there is a lack of research that investigates the on-going legacy of detention and the consequences for the sense of belonging, social integration and wellbeing of ex-detainees. This thesis draws on in-depth narrative interviews with 16 migrant women in the UK who were detained and then released from UK Immigration Removal Centres and five charity workers. Within migration scholarship the paradigm of exclusion has been traditionally adopted to understand how states seek to protect borders, keeping unwanted individuals out or contained. A spatial examination of respondents' critical geographies of home reveals however that despite their release from detention these women continued to negotiate multiple and fluctuating boundaries. It is argued therefore that this paradigm obscures a nuanced perspective and proposes instead a discourse of precarity. Not only can the 'state of precarity' implicit within narratives of detention seep into and define the everyday geographies of home beyond release, respondents' everyday negotiations with home remained central to the construction and proliferation of everyday precarity. This is achieved through a home-infused geopolitical rhetoric and interventions in the name of immigration enforcement which were revealed through (in)secure spaces of home. An exploration of emotional and embodied geographies also exposes erosive implications for feelings of belonging and health and wellbeing. A discourse of precarity therefore allows for a differentiation and critical inquiry of subjective gendered positions, citizenship and importantly, emergent accounts of resilience, reworking and resistance on predominantly social trajectories.

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BID	Bail for Immigration Detainees
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
DFT	Detained Fast Track
DL	Discretionary Leave
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
FNO	Foreign National Offender
GLA	Great London Authority
HP	Humanitarian Protection
IRC	Immigration Removal Centre
ILR	Indefinite Leave to Remain
LA	Local Authority
LDSG	London Detainee Support Group
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
UKBA	UK Border Agency

This chapter provides an introduction to this research project. It traces the evolution of ideas from its inception to a summary of the main themes, an outline of the research methodology and an overview of the theoretical debates. It concludes by detailing the overall thesis structure.

### 1.1 Background: A personal admission

The journey which brought me to this point began some time ago in the late 1980s in Sierra Leone as the country's civil war was beginning to gain momentum. I had been living with my parents and sister in a rural village for some 7 years whilst my parents were engaged in development work. While my identity as a young girl of mixed Mauritian and British parentage was a marker of difference in my everyday interactions with local playmates, my position of privilege came into sharp relief when my family was instructed to leave the country on account of the growing conflict. The logistical ease with which we returned to the UK was to provide an early awareness of my family's relatively fortunate entitlements; to remove itself quickly from danger and return to a country in which we were welcomed and could expect to be safe. Those who were left behind or who became displaced as the conflict spread were not necessarily so lucky. Leaving behind all that was familiar also afforded an insight into what leaving 'home' meant and the challenges of forging new friendships and attachments to place, albeit in a welcoming and receptive community. These early insights have remained with me and are responsible in part for my interest in the experiences of women seeking safety, with years of thought and study converging in the (in)tangible form of this research project. Of particular interest has been the use of punitive measures, namely immigration detention, as a response to vulnerable people seeking a place of safety.

### 1.2 Context

While immigration detention is portrayed by UK government policy as a last resort in 'extreme cases', the past decade has seen the detention estate expand and detention practices becoming integral to the asylum process (Phelps, 2009). This includes an implicit role in a broader politics of deterrence and more explicitly through the visible implementation of the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) management of asylum applications through the Detained Fast Track (DFT) (Silove et al., 2000). These political measures are rooted in the 1971 Immigration Act, further substantiated by non-statutory regulations such as the UK Border Agency Enforcement Instructions and Guidance (McGregor, 2009). Charitable groups and activists have expressed concerns about the high rates of

those released from DFT and the continued risk of detention to people who have been tortured and trafficked (Tsangarides, 2012, BID, 2009), concerns echoed by The Independent Chief Inspector of the UKBA (Vine, 2011).

Unlike prison, detention for immigration serves the purpose not of penance or rehabilitation but the active removal of individuals from the UK (Klein and Williams, 2012). Asylum-seekers are detained indefinitely and at any stage of the asylum process, for varying reasons and, as a consequence, sometimes repeatedly. In contrast to fixed prison sentences determined through court hearings, individuals are incarcerated when deemed appropriate and necessary by an immigration officer. While bail hearings may be applied for, detainees may not have legal representation nor be familiar enough with the asylum system to actuate this themselves (McGregor, 2009). The decision to detain has been widely criticised as arbitrary and inconsistent, based upon the availability of beds rather than necessity, proportionality or appropriateness. Sustained criticisms have been directed over the violation of human rights and questions asked about the genuine long-term effectiveness in reducing asylum applications (Gibney, 2004, Amnesty International, 2005, Phelps, 2009).

Particular shortcomings are observed in the treatment of women detainees and calls made for a more gender sensitive asylum system (Asylum Aid, 2009). Indeed, while migrant women have a range of specific needs (Binder and Tošić, 2005) and “a substantial proportion of refugee women arriving in the UK can be assumed [...] to have survived rape, attempted rape, other sexual violence or sexual exploitation” these individual experiences are often overlooked and poorly dealt with (Refugee Council, 2009: 4). While the experiences of migrants are more generally characterised by social and economic deprivation and poorer health outcomes amongst others, the needs of women have been misunderstood and generalised. Indeed, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants has highlighted the specific hardships faced by female migrants from physical and sexual violence to under-nourishment and slavery (Coomaraswamy, 2002). There already exists a damning body of literature which highlights the deleterious effects of detention on mental health (Robjant et al., 2009), which adds cumulative strain to the range of other post-displacement stressors such as prolonged asylum procedures, resident-status uncertainty, unemployment, and discrimination (De Haene et al., 2010: 1668). Further research is needed however to understand better the unique needs of detained women and the long term consequences of incarceration.

The true scale of UK detention is revealed through government published statistics<sup>1</sup>. During the second quarter of 2013, 7,944 people were detained in the UK ‘for the purposes of immigration control’, 1,138 of whom were women. The total figure for the year ending June 2013 was 29,710, an increase of 5% from the previous year (28,239) and the highest figure using comparable data available from 2009 (Home Office, 2013). Those detained include asylum-seekers, undocumented migrants and foreign nationals who have finished a criminal sentence. While individuals are detained in a number of settings including prisons, airports and police stations, these figures only reflect those held in one of the UK’s ten Immigration Removal Centres (IRC), short-term holding facilities and pre-departure accommodation. Of those leaving detention during the second quarter of 2013, 62% had been detained for less than 29 days, 19% for between 29 days and two months and 13% for between two and four months. Of those remaining, 60 had been detained for between one and two years and 13 for two years or longer (*ibid*). Figures also show that in line with previous years, an average of 35% of detainees went on to be released; a percentage many activists believe demonstrates the ineffectiveness of detention practices (BID, 2009).

While these statistics indicate a significant release rate they do not provide any detail about how release occurs, indeed as Klein and Williamson (2012: 743) observe,

“Because release into the community does not correspond to policy rhetoric emphasising an unproblematic progression through detention to removal or naturalisation, it is more convenient for the UK government to airbrush the very large numbers of released migrants from view than to engage in a public discussion”.

This means detainees are often ill-prepared for release, concerns about which have been raised by HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons (2011: 16) who observed of Yarl’s Wood IRC “[t]here was no systematic approach to assessing needs and helping detainees to prepare for removal or release”. Indeed, the only reference to preparing detainees for release within the Detention Centre Rules<sup>2</sup>, the primary guidance for UK immigration detention, is in regards to healthcare records and returning material items to detainees.

The evasion of this issue is echoed by the dearth of research within geography and across other disciplines that investigates how individuals fare after release and the long-term implications of

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<sup>1</sup> The publication of detention statistics is relatively new and only arose since 2009.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/enforcement/detentionandremovals/chapter55.pdf?view=Binary>

detention for individuals and communities. What little research there is signals that ex-detainees encounter an “existence of living on the margins of society in constant fear of arrest, re-detention, and removal, without entitlement to work or other means of sustaining a reasonable quality of life” (Klein and Williams, 2012: 743). McGregor (2009) has explored the social and political legacies of detention for Zimbabwean migrants and highlights the detrimental effects on mental health, social relationships, perceptions of the UK and a sense of belonging.

Bhui (2007) also observes the protracted legacies of detention with wide-reaching disruptions to social cohesion, resettlement and mental health. In their review of geographies of detention, confinement and imprisonment, Martin and Mitchelson (2009: 472) have warned against the fetishisation of detention centres as contained and detached, suggesting that “the conceptual terminology of detention – exceptionality, indistinction, indeterminacy – could provide avenues for examining the effects of detention beyond detention centers”. These studies highlight a range of significant long term effects of detention and support the need for further investigations across different spatial and temporal scales that afford further nuanced examinations of these distinct legacies.

My research project seeks therefore to respond to this gap, by investigating the experiences of migrant women who had been detained in the UK for immigration purposes and then released. Whilst there is also need for research which investigates the experiences of ex-detained men, my research is concerned with women. Not only do women have unique needs that are overlooked by often gender-neutral (inter)national immigration policy, (ex)detained women remain a particularly underrepresented and underserved minority group within the already marginalised migrant population. More specifically, my research aim is to investigate how the geopolitical spaces and practices of detention are implicated in women’s experiences of ‘home’ post-release. My research questions are:

### 1.3 Research questions:

1. What does ‘home’ mean for previously detained women and how has this changed after their release from detention?
2. How do women create ‘home’ after release from detention?
3. In what ways do the processes and legacies of detention affect the lives of women?
4. How is ‘home’ implicated in previously detained women’s wellbeing after detention.

#### 1.4 Adopting a geographical perspective

In order to investigate the legacies of detention my research is grounded within key geographical perspectives.

##### *Geopolitics of detention*

Much of the existing geographical scholarship on detention, imprisonment and confinement has been concerned with the spatialities and detached geographies of detention sites, politico-spatial tactics and situated material practices (Martin and Mitchelson, 2009, Gregory, 2006, Hyndman and Mountz, 2008, Sexton and Lee, 2006). Political geographers have been heavily influenced by Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben's (1998, 2005) thinking about sovereign power. Agamben builds upon Schmitt's definition of the sovereign as the one who has the power to decide where law is indefinitely 'suspended' in certain spaces yet without being abolished. While for Schmitt these 'spaces of exception' are bounded and discrete such as the concentration camp or detention centre, Agamben asserts that this simultaneous inclusion/exclusion has seeped into political life and become the norm; giving rise to localised 'zones of indistinction' between the force of law and the suspension of law. The state defines between 'political beings' (citizens) and 'bare life' (bodies) which is manifested through everyday decisions made by 'petty sovereigns' (Butler, 2006) and through state bureaucracies (Martin and Mitchelson, 2009). As those defined as bare life are excluded the sovereign simultaneously gains control over them through their exclusion; "this naked life figure thus exists in a relation and a sphere of exception. So who or what decides the original status or production of this bare life figure and his ongoing management takes on a very particular kind of power - the power to decide the exception" (Mitchell, 2006: 96). These ideas have appealed widely to geographers not least because of their inherently spatial foundations, continuing to deeply influence scholarship on sovereign power and how this is realised. Whilst influential, Agamben has received some criticism (Belcher et al., 2008), not least by feminists who underscore his neglect of how gender is imbricated in sovereign abandonment, giving rise to gender insensitive research (Mountz, 2011, Pratt, 2005).

##### *Critical geographies of home*

Home has long been of interest to feminists and a key starting point within discourses of migration. Given its breadth of application to debates of transnationality, identity and belonging, this created a strong argument for employing home as a lens through which to conceptually extend investigations of detention (Al-Ali and Koser, 2004). Critical geographies of home move beyond an interpretation of home as a merely material site, to one that "consists of imagination, routinized everyday practices,

relationship networks, and representation imbued with personal and social meaning, cultural ideals, and values”(Butcher, 2010: 24-25). My interpretation of home is deliberately expansive so as to facilitate an examination of its material, imagined, emotional, visual and sensory dimensions, aiding an equally holistic investigation of the legacy of detention. This focus furthers existing feminist enquiries of transnational homes and home as a gendered and subjective site of resistance and oppression. While conceptual interpretations of home are integral throughout, my focus is equally on the physical dwelling and everyday negotiations of these material geographies.

Belonging is also integral to discourses of home, with concurrent investigations mobilised especially through interrogations of transnationalism and homemaking practices (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, Mee, 2009, Tolia-Kelly, 2006, 2008, Mee and Wright, 2009). Both home and belonging operate on multiple scales, are located in place and remain tied up with multiple positionalities (Mallett, 2004, Akinwumi, 2006, Binaiisa, 2011). My interpretation of belonging throughout is therefore as an extension of home, through a sense of ‘feeling at home’. Belonging and home are also entangled with identity as the question of ‘who am I?’ remains inseparable from ‘where do I belong?’ (Loader, 2006: 25). This association is complex as, not only are the processes involved in creating home and developing a sense of belonging instrumental in the construction of identity, migrant identities and experiences of home are both plural (Blunt and Varley, 2004, Antonsich, 2010). In allowing accounts of potentially active, fluid and diverse negotiations with home to emerge this research has also sought to gain an insight into the previously neglected gendered identities of women after detention and how these may be embroiled with the home and negotiated.

### *Geographies of health and wellbeing*

As I discuss in Chapter Three, I had originally planned to investigate the mental health of women after release from detention, but it became apparent that this was an inadequate framework for accommodating the multifaceted nature of respondents’ experiences. I also wished to avoid reductionist categorisations which notions of mental health threatened to reinscribe. I therefore developed a more inclusive conceptualisation of wellbeing led by respondents’ narratives which allowed for the embodied, psychological, social, cultural, economic and political dimensions of these experiences and their gendered nature (Dyck, 2003). This was in line with geography’s more contemporary investigations of wellbeing which recognise its implicitly emotional, mental and physical dimensions (Chase, 2013, Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007, Pain and Hopkins, 2009).

This research departs from and adds to these existing bodies of work by offering a contemporary feminist geopolitical perspective of how life beyond detention may be unpacked through a focus on the home and how this is implicated in women's experiences of citizenship, identity and belonging. This will help to uncover underlying power dynamics that shape the everyday experiences of ex-detained women and contribute to a "more accountable, embodied, and responsive notion of geopolitics" as advocated by Hyndman (2001: 212). This demands a revisiting of everyday, localised sites like home which might help trace the shifts and cracks in the geopolitical climate through a focus on the emotional topographies of everyday life (Pain, 2009).

### 1.5 Methodological outline

My qualitative research is based upon a feminist methodology which utilised a narrative approach (Moss, 2002). This was because I wanted to hear the women's stories in their own words in order to access their life worlds on which they remained expert. This was also to acknowledge the active and dynamic process of narrative storytelling "to remember, bear witness, or seek to restore continuity and identity, [becoming] a symbolic resource enlisted to alleviate suffering and change their situation" (Eastmond, 2007: 251). While acknowledging that previously detained women constituted a 'hard to reach group' I had still hoped to access a larger sample (Browne, 2005). In reality however I engaged 16 women in in-depth narrative interviews, accessed through contacts with charitable organisations and through snowballing (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). I also spoke in less depth with 5 charity workers. All respondents had been detained in Yarl's Wood IRC for between 1 ½ weeks and 22 months. With the exception of three participants who were Asian, the majority were of African nationalities and ranged in age from 19 to 60 years. They were of varying immigration statuses either refused asylum-seekers, asylum-seekers, refugees and one 'Foreign National Offender' (FNO)<sup>3</sup>.

Fieldwork was conducted in London, Brighton, Manchester, Dover, Nottingham and Doncaster, determined by the location of charities and the cities to which some respondents had been dispersed before or after periods of detention (Sales, 2002). Given the focus on home, the majority of fieldwork was conducted in the homes of respondents but also in community settings such as cafes and charity sites. This afforded rich insights into everyday geographies of home as a material,

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<sup>3</sup> One participant had not claimed asylum but as a foreign national convicted of criminal activity she was detained after serving prison time. This term is used purely to establish immigration status and is recognised as problematic and stigmatising, not unlike the other legal identities.

embodied and sensory space. Interviews with 5 charity workers provided valuable contextual knowledge and helped deepen insights into participants' social support systems.

The ethical implications of conducting research with potentially vulnerable women has been a key consideration at every stage, not just during fieldwork but during analysis and when representing participants' voices throughout this thesis. I have taken care to safeguard the best interests of participants, not least respecting confidentiality and respondents' right to withdraw whilst attempting to forge trusting relationships. On-going reflexivity also helped me look honestly at my positionality during research encounters and beyond, remaining aware of power dynamics.

### 1.6 Seeking a differential theoretical framework

Embarking upon this research project I was, like many other geographers, drawn to Agamben's (1998, 2005) conceptualisations, indeed I found much resonance in the narratives of exclusion which appeared to define participants' lives beyond detention. I wanted to understand how the home might be implicated in these 'zones of indistinction' beyond release and initially proposed that these spaces could be conceptualised as an extension of this zone. This is echoed by Darling (2009) who observes that refused asylum-seekers through a 'deliberate policy of destitution' are rendered bare life while continuing to exist within the UK wider community. He notes that;

"The ability to strip an individual of all housing, social, and financial support is thus predicated upon an Agambenian sovereign act of abandonment which places individuals outside the law, for their situation is seen to have fully exhausted the normal remits of legal proceedings, no matter how flawed such proceedings may have been" (652).

While the applicability to some extent remains undisputable, interpreting life beyond detention purely through Agambenian conceptualisations was to stretch their theoretical seams in three key ways. Firstly, it did not accommodate the gendered nature of the women's experience and accommodate how their identities were (re)worked through the home with varying effects (Pratt, 2005). Agamben is accused by feminists of failing to differentiate the interchangeable (male) figure of homo sacer (Mitchell, 2006) and Mountz (2011: 382) notes that relying entirely on Agamben's generalisable social theory is to overlook the real-life intimacies of exclusion including the "struggles of asylum-seekers to access sovereign territory, the gendered and racialized dimensions of their exclusion and possibilities for transnational engagement and collaboration across social movements". As Sanchez (2004: 879 cited in, Pratt, 2005) notes, "the law of exclusion, far from

being an equal-opportunity subordinator, targets gendered and racialized bodies most persistently, but it does so partially and differentially”.

In the second instance, portraying respondents as bare life was to overlook the multiple, everyday acts of resilience, reworking and resistance which occurred on predominantly social trajectories (Lenette et al., 2012, Katz, 2004). Agamben (1998) asserts that by definition the *homo sacer* only comprehends the reality of his situation in the final hour before death, thus leaving no opportunity for resistance or escape. While stereotypical representations portray women migrants as passive victims and ‘secondary’ to men within migratory scholarship (Crawley, 1999b), depictions which contributed to participants’ simultaneous infantilisation and criminalisation, there were accounts where the conditions brought about by hegemonic, oppressive and often highly gendered forces were contested. This underscored the centrality of their experiences as women and how their sense of belonging and identities were negotiated and in some cases reworked.

Thirdly, there was not the scope to make sense of participants’ negotiations with the multiple, porous and evolving boundaries of home that they encountered in everyday life and the degree to which these were experienced as (in)secure. Porosity was described as the irregularity and unpredictability of everyday material and performative boundaries of home, which above all were susceptible to the state’s incursion. While the notion of porosity might be understood as a manifestation of Agamben’s simultaneous inclusion/exclusion, the absolute nature of ‘bare life’ is to overlook the fluid and progressive nature of these everyday encounters. Indeed, Pratt (2005: 1057) might be understood as speaking to the notion of porosity in her own (more convincing) interpretations of legal abandonment which she notes “occurs through a complex and gendered layering and enfolding of geographies of public and private, one into the other”. Mountz (2013: 4) observes that Agamben’s recursive relationship between the inside and outside of sovereign territory promotes a spatial binary which in conjunction with US and UK political priorities is responsible for the shift towards a generalised exceptionalism. While these binaries endure within geographical literature there have been attempts to deconstruct these by investigations of exceptional locations such as Guantanamo Bay (Gregory, 2006, Kaplan, 2005, Reid-Henry, 2007). Indeed, Mountz (2013: 5) acknowledges the “productive blurring of onshore and offshore, internal and external, inside and out in reconfigurations of sovereignty”. While arguably reinscribing Agamben’s spatial binaries this nevertheless conveys a shift towards a more critical engagement with the enactment of sovereign power and highlights the productive potential of broadening these key theoretical ideas.

The benefits of hindsight aside, my original research questions were based upon a static, bounded interpretation of detention but as the research progressed it became clear that detention was not so circumscribed. It was the *legacies and processes* of detention which were caught up with broader narratives of everyday life. Investigating the home provided a counter-topographical perspective which, while certainly revealing of the stagnating and liminal states of exclusion that participants encountered, also highlighted the materiality of these processes and legacies (Katz, 2001). Mountz (2011: 392) has encouraged further transnational feminist projects that move beyond the universal nature of exceptionalism to more nuanced analyses of the methods and embodied dimensions of exclusion. These include projects which pursue a politics of location (as opposed to dislocation); cross-border politics of differentiation and construction of solidarities across borders. This signals a productive potential to unpack the contemporary practices and spatialities of sovereign power within other spaces such as the home. The centrality of home in this regard to my research was revealed both implicitly and explicitly; from a broader geopolitical significance within a homeland discourse, to the practical, emotional and embodied geographies of the physical dwelling and local community. Together these provided a greater insight into the multidimensional nature of life beyond detention, facilitating an equally broad and holistic interpretation of wellbeing.

### 1.7 A 'state of precarity?'

In view of these considerations I began seeking an alternative theoretical framework that accommodated respondents' nuanced, gendered and differentiated experiences of the legacies and processes of detention beyond release, whilst also allowing for their acts of resilience, reworking and resistance. All narratives were characterised by their precarious nature, expressed on interchangeable temporal and spatial scales through innumerable accounts of uncertainty, indeterminacy and (in)security. This speaks to Martin and Mitchelson's (2009) assertion that the indeterminacy of detention is evoked through the temporal uncertainty of indefinite incarceration. Indeed, their proposal that "*the spectre of being detained* may produce its own sense of indeterminacy" clearly infers that this uncertainty of detention might endure beyond release (472 original emphasis). I began conceptualising these characteristics through a discourse of precarity which, while still extending and augmenting an Agambenian framework through an engagement with home, felt more fitting than more absolute interpretations. Of particular appeal was the recognition that as well as a condition, precarity may mobilise responsive action (Waite, 2009). This highlighted a productive potential for accommodating the acts of agency and attempts to contest everyday precarity.

Crucially, my conceptualisations move away from traditional interpretations of precarity which have remained central to debates on labour conditions (Anderson, 2007) and are grounded instead within Butler's (2006, 2009) ontological investigations which distinguish between 'precariousness' and 'precarity'. While the former is defined as the corporeal vulnerability shared by all mortals including the privileged, the latter is the specific vulnerability imposed on the poor, the disenfranchised, and those endangered by war or natural disaster (Watson, 2012). There is clear resonance with Agambenian thought, not least because precarity is essentially born from the relegation of certain individuals to what essentially constitutes a state of bare life through the state's declaration of their inhumanity. Furthermore, Butler suggests that generalised precariousness breeds the conditions from which precarity is born for those perceived as a threat, legitimising the measures taken to perpetuate this. A discourse of precarity then affords opportunities not only to discern the experiences of those living precarious lives but also the conditions which give rise to it.

These debates are inexorably connected to the home and speak to feminist geopolitics which recognises the centrality of home on multiple scales. Brickell (2012: 585) recognises that the micro-politics of home are inextricable from a broader geopolitical rhetoric which has become infused with a discourse of home, indeed she contends that "geopolitics is influenced by, and emerges from, the home". Concepts of home have therefore become absorbed into political rhetoric, contributing to a domopolitics which rationalises and legitimises defensive strategies taken to protect the 'homeland' from invasion (Darling, 2009, Walters, 2004) and a response to a discursive precariousness. Furthermore as respondents in this study attest, these strategies played out within and in relation to the home through material and performative dimensions.

The centrality of home to a 'state of precarity' is equally revealed through participants' everyday encounters with the material home. Indeed their framing of home through key ideas of (in)security and porosity illustrates how these homespaces were experienced as being invaded and infiltrated by the state, compounding feelings of powerlessness and subordination (Brickell, 2012b). This strategic use of home was ultimately legitimated by the homeland infused rhetoric, casting light on the cumulative utilisation of home on different scales and as an iterative process between discursive precariousness and localised, everyday precarity. Not only did the 'state of precarity' implicit to narratives of detention appear to seep into and define the everyday geographies of home beyond release, respondents' everyday negotiations with home also remained central to the construction and proliferation of everyday precarity. Crucially, this remained inherently gendered.

## 1.8 Thesis outline

In the next chapter I locate my research within the geographical literature on the key themes outlined here, namely geopolitics of detention, critical geographies of home, belonging and gendered identity, and wellbeing. Chapter Three outlines in some depth my methodological approach and the execution of my research methodology.

As the discussion in this chapter has indicated, the broad geographical bodies of work from which this research draws and to which it contributes are deeply entwined and co-contingent; indeed the landscapes that respondents navigated were constructed by the interweaving of key geographical ideas. Because of this the delineation of this thesis's five empirical chapters are to some extent arbitrary and born from a need to create a coherent path through respondents' collective, yet differentiated representations. Each chapter grapples with a key theme to assist in unpacking the legacies and processes of detention, which collectively recreates a broader 'state of precarity'. To that end, Chapter Four is concerned with the early stages of the women's narratives. I suggest that these women's lives were precarious from the outset, often rooted in deeply uncertain and unpredictable circumstances which led to their migration. I suggest that this precarity endured on arrival for many reasons, not least their encounters with the asylum system and periods of detention.

The subsequent two chapters explore the centrality of home in the construction and negotiation of everyday precarity beyond release from detention. Chapter Five deals with the types of physical dwellings that respondents encountered, and explores how these were defined by (in)security and porosity. I engage with the materiality of home and its construction through routinized everyday practices. Chapter Six extends investigations of home by deconstructing accounts of belonging and 'feeling at home' in the UK. I interrogate how gendered identities and disruptions to the gendered life course were embroiled with the often infantilising legacies and processes of detention and uncertain immigration status. While this ultimately fuelled a precarious state of being and undermined belonging, I also identify active attempts to contest and renegotiate dominant discourses of criminality and (not) being human.

Having illustrated the construction of precarity through the lens of home, Chapter Seven investigates the lived consequences through an examination of wellbeing. This reveals both the multifaceted nature of wellbeing and the complex and predominantly detrimental interchange between wellbeing, the legacies and processes of detention and precarity. While the preceding chapters seek to understand how precarity is manifested, Chapter Eight is concerned with how women dealt with

this in their everyday lives through the utilisation of social support and through the 'everyday'. In conclusion, Chapter Nine takes up and develops the key theoretical debates outlined in this chapter to frame better the legacies and processes of detention within a discourse of precarity to which home remains central. I conclude by discussing the key contributions of the research, its limitations and some recommendations for future study.

This chapter provides an overview and critically engages with the key geographical areas in which this research is located and to which it contributes. These fields include the geopolitics of detention, critical geographies of home, and geographies of health and wellbeing. In nesting these vast overarching areas of research together, I seek to contextualise and extend the underlying narrative on which this research project is based.

### 2.1 Geopolitics of detention

Mountz et al (2012) note that the global uptake of detention has gained momentum over recent decades, resulting in a stark landscape characterised by growing numbers of diverse detention facilities located in mainland or offshore sites holding record numbers of people. The UK's detention estate has also expanded in capacity to 3275 beds in 10 detention centres (Refugee Council, 2013d). These were formally renamed 'Immigration Removal Centres' (IRC) under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 to "reflect the part played by detention in the removal of failed asylum-seekers and others". While people are also held in other locations such as police stations, prisons, airports and police stations these additional numbers are hidden from official statistics. Mallock and Stanley (2005) note the influence of media and political representations of asylum-seekers and refugees which are infused with a rhetoric of 'risk' and 'criminality', and argue that detention is essentially a punitive measure designed to mollify public fear around this perceived threat. Others note that while deportation, dispersal and detention were always part of the UK government's 'arsenal of control', the pervasive culture of threat has seen them become established strategies (Bloch and Schuster, 2005). Given the massive expense and widespread consensus that detention remains largely ineffective in stemming flows of migration and deporting unwanted individuals, some authors argue that it serves a predominantly symbolic purpose; marking key boundaries between groups of un/desirable people (Gibney and Hansen, 2003, Silverman and McNeil, 2012).

Whilst detention practices and their effects have been investigated by non-governmental organisations (Amnesty International, 2005, BID, 2009, Refugee Council, 2013d, Tsangarides, 2012) and within psychological and medical fields (Steel and Silove, 2000, Coffey et al., 2010, Silove et al., 2000) there is only now an emerging body of geographical work, despite their spatial specificity.

Martin and Mitchelson (2009) speak of distinct and emerging geographies of detention, imprisonment and confinement which are concerned with the manipulation, restriction and movement of people for political ends. This emergent body of work has been provoked in part by contemporary exposés of US embroilment in torture and detention scandals which have motivated geographers to take up these key issues (2006, Gregory, 2004, Coleman, 2007a, Sexton and Lee, 2006, Hyndman and Mountz, 2008). Martin and Mitchelson (2009) usefully track this trend and argue that a geographical analysis offers (amongst others) three key contributions to wider discourses. Firstly confinement is a spatial practice, secondly it remains indicative of emergent state forms, and thirdly is a site of discursive production. While my research is concerned with detention, clear parallels also exist with geographies of imprisonment and confinement. Indeed, pertinent connections exist between domestic prison practices and UK immigration detention, not least because the detention estate is managed primarily by private companies who also run prisons. This represents an extensive private industry which is politically and economically powerful and motivated by the lucrative business of incarcerating asylum-seekers (Bacon, 2005: 25). A crucial inconsistency is that detained asylum-seekers are not necessarily charged with criminal offences. However, the multiple political barriers established to deter migrants from seeking asylum, often leave individuals no choice but to resort to methods later deemed criminal (Black, 2003).

A unique characteristic of detention is a temporal and spatial indeterminacy which permeates the past, present and future experiences of detainees. This indeterminacy stems in part from the inconsistent implementation of detention by nation-states, with legal and political ambiguities contriving a pervasive indeterminacy (Martin and Mitchelson, 2009). Many argue however that this indeterminacy is employed strategically to evade legal obligations to immigration legislation, resulting in the exclusion and isolation of asylum-seekers (Bloch and Schuster, 2005). Temporally, indeterminacy is propagated by the practice of indefinite detention. Unlike convicted criminals dealt a fixed prison sentence, asylum-seekers are incarcerated indefinitely, sometimes without legal representation (Phelps, 2009). Butler (2006: 67) defines indefinite detention as “an illegitimate exercise of power” which is “part of a broader tactic to neutralize the rule of law in the name of security”. Indefinite detention is perceived as one such contentious tactic, provoking criticism from academics, charitable organisations and health professionals alike (Gibney, 2004, UNHCR, 2005). Research by the London Detainee Support Group shows that detention is becoming increasingly common, with worrying links between the length of detention and negative consequences for health (Phelps, 2009). Leading figures call for more research to document the real human costs, in particular those to health (Grove and Zwi, 2006). Martin and Mitchelson (2009) however warn that

renewed engagements by academics may inadvertently valorise prolific detention practices by liberal democracies. They recommend that researchers remain critical rather than framing these tactics as integral to immigration control.

Spatially, indeterminacy is born from progressively 'detached geographies of detention' where people are held and mobilised through "'stateless' spaces in quasistate territories and within national territories, in airports and detention centers such as the long tunnel in Esquimalt" (Mountz, 2004: 431). This also constitutes the now conventional practice of 'externalisation'; strategic geographical tactics of respatialisation that move foreign migrants away from social and legal support (McLoughlin and Warin, 2008). Hyndman and Mountz (2008: 250) observe tactics by Australia and EU countries of externalisation where detention facilities are located in off-shore settings and on transit routes resulting in 'neo-refoulement'. This prevents migrants from reaching the destination country where they might seek asylum, being held instead in transit countries or regions where their legal rights are curtailed and nation-states are relinquished from their legal obligation under Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The increasing utilisation of these strategies indicates a fundamental shift from a rights-based approach to inconsistent geopolitical practices concerned with homeland security that endeavour to externalise and isolate those seeking asylum (Gibney and Hansen, 2003: 14).

Gill's (2009, 2009b) contrastive work on UK detention highlights a tension between rigid spatial regulations within detention centres which seek to contain 'threatening' individuals and the use of forced mobility as a strategy of control. He observes that 'intra-detention estate mobility' represents detainees as transitory but causes inconsistencies and disruptions to the social and legal support that detainees receive, resulting in broken support networks and poorer legal outcomes. Simultaneously, the detention itself is legitimised in part through asylum-seekers' representation as uncontrollably mobile, perpetuating a sense of society under imminent threat (Hyndman and Mountz, 2008).

Martin and Mitchelson (2009) note an incongruity between perceptions of detention as an ephemeral process, and the harsh, lived experience of detainees. Geographical work has interrogated the materiality and performativity of detention and prison sites, in particular torture practices and strategies of control (Gregory, 2004, Sexton and Lee, 2006). Falah (2007) has written first-hand about his incarceration and torture in an Israeli prison. Using an emotional lens, Hall (2010) investigates the lives of detainees, and underscores the emotional responses of staff

members. She observes how the legal and political factors which contrive these exceptional spaces are absorbed by detention staff, effecting their emotional responses to and treatment of detainees. Other work has examined the internal world of carceral spaces. Baer (2005) has observed the materiality of prison space through a focus on inmates' attempts to personalise this through visual imprinting, to differing ends. Other work, contesting Goffman's (1961) early conceptualisations of the 'total institution', has observed how prisons and detention centres may be perceived less as contained and bounded but a hybrid of the inside and outside, manifesting an 'indistinction' which supports fluid and active conceptualisations of confinement (Baer and Ravneberg, 2008, Moran, 2013, Moran and Keinänen, 2012).

### *2.1.1 Agamben's 'state of exception'*

In seeking to conceptualise the spaces and practices of detention and theorise the spatialisation of exclusion, many geographers have taken up Agamben's (2005) 'state of exception' which is a contemporary reading of German theorist Carl Schmitt's theorising of sovereignty and law while also speaking to Foucault, Arendt and Benjamin (Gregory, 2009, Gregory, 2004, Gregory, 2006, Minca, 2005, Coleman, 2007a). In *Homo Sacer* (1998) Agamben develops Foucault's (1977) problematisation of sovereign-judicial governance and suggests that the sovereign (state) delineates boundaries between included political beings ('citizens') and excluded foreign others who are distinguished as 'bare life' (bodies). Agamben evokes the figure of the homo sacer, a position constructed by "archaic Roman law upon those who could not be sacrificed according to ritual (because they were outside divine law: their deaths were of no value to the gods) but who could be killed with impunity (because they were outside juridical law: their lives were of no value to their contemporaries)" (Gregory, 2006: 406). While for Foucault the state gains control over its subjects in part through self-governance, Agamben accentuates the state's exceptional ability to render individuals bare life through their abandonment.

Agamben (1998) has given geographers a framework for conceptualising the exclusion of certain groups and the ambiguous legal conditions responsible for the construction of material zones of indistinction. Gregory (2006, 2004, 2009) examines the detached and externalised geographies of the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. Agamben asserts that within certain quasi-legal spaces or 'zones of indistinction' the rule of law is suspended for certain people. The camp takes on a paradoxical status whereby it is located outside the juridical order yet is simultaneously "a hybrid of law and fact in which the two terms have become indistinguishable" and "[w]hoever entered the camp moved in a zone of indistinction between outside and inside,

exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer made any sense (Agamben, 1998: 97). The rendering of certain Others as bare life therefore marks the point at which they transition from 'human' to 'non-human', mere biological beings that are malleable by sovereign power.

While the state of exception occurs within bounded, territorial spaces, Agamben argues that the state's reach is more insidious, becoming a normalising 'fundamental ordering principle in modern politics' as it is the inclusive exclusion of bare (biological) life on which modern western democracy pivots (Martin and Mitchelson, 2009: 467). While detention centres like Guantanamo have been conceived as classic spaces of exception, others interpret their existence as normalised and instrumental in the expansion and re-composition of sovereign, governmental, and disciplinary powers (Gregory, 2006, Reid-Henry, 2007). Indeed, while the spatial specificity of Agamben's state of exception is more explicit in his earlier work through a representation of exceptional spaces, his later *State of Exception* (2005) focuses on what he defines as a 'state of emergency' which occurs in times of crisis. Indeed, Coleman (2007b: 90) usefully clarifies that Agamben asks us to consider;

"Not the localization of the exception or sovereign exceptional power [...] but its illocalization, or how the exception comes to mesh with, or in fact constitute, the state of law against which it is typically defined. The difference is, to put it in Foucauldian terms, between a disciplinary art of government grounded in a specific place (i.e. a camp, interpreted literally) and a quite different amorphous technology of security which infuses and envelops all spaces".

Indeed, the culture of fear so strategically perpetuated throughout the war on/of terror has contrived an indefinite state of emergency where the suspension of law for the 'common good' is deemed a legitimate necessity (Pain, 2006). Agamben's theorisations afford the potential to unpack the topological (as opposed to topographical) conditions which create the exception, which are not preformed but an emergent and dynamic techniques of power (Belcher et al., 2008). Agamben's 'state of exception' is therefore underpinned by and speaks to the construction of the Other with implications for those rendered bare life as well as the rights and statuses of political beings (citizens).

### *2.1.2 Constructing the Other*

Conceptualisations of the abjected Other remain central to Agamben's conceptualisations of bare life and the state of exception, and are influenced by Foucault's (1977) scholarship on sovereign power. As Coleman (2007b) notes, both Foucault and Agamben are concerned with biopolitics but

with different readings. Foucault remains deeply influential in conceptualisations of power, from his work on disciplinary power, governmentality, biopower and biopolitics. For Foucault the latter is the governance of biological beings through mechanisms which appeal to their state of living. Agamben's understanding of biopower is the "radical exposure produced by sovereign power in which the law is suspended and bodies are surrendered to a zone of indistinction between sacrifice and homicide, where they can literally be put to death with impunity" (Coleman, 2007b: 187). Indeed, the 'birth of the Camp' (or detention centre) actively defines modern sovereign law and the spaces of modernity;

"Inasmuch as its inhabitants have been stripped of any political status and reduced completely to bare life, the Camp is also the most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been realized - a space in which power confronts nothing other than pure biological life without any mediation" (Agamben, 2000: 40).

Indeed, asylum-seekers and refugees are instrumental in a global imaginary which contributes to what Fisher (2006: 51) calls 'fearism' when fear becomes normalised and operative yet relatively invisible. In this way, fear "produces fearful subjects in relation to fearsome others and secures the very boundaries between us and them" (Zembylas, 2010: 33). Rachel Pain (2009) elucidates that this is constitutive of a geopolitics of fear that is, amongst other factors, undergirded by notions of external, foreign threats. For Pain, geographical dealings with fear have historically been top-down and selective in its representation. As such she argues that the centrality of fear in geopolitics must be re-evaluated from a feminist, emotional standpoint which seeks a nuanced understanding of how fear permeates everyday lives, critically investigating and challenging assumptions about fear, the fearful and the feared (475). Detained individuals occupy an indeterminate state between being catalysts or objects of fear while simultaneously living in fear; of deportation, abuse and isolation.

The way in which those who are feared or deemed 'undesirable' and whose right to protection by the state remains undecided is predicated upon their constitution as Others. Othering is a process that strengthens one's own identity by stigmatising and creating distance from those who are not us. As Grove and Zwi (2006: 1933) explain "[i]ts purpose is to reinforce notions of our own 'normality', and to set up the difference of others as a point of deviance. The person or group being 'othered' experiences this as a process of marginalisation, disempowerment and social exclusion". Othering underpins a sense of belonging for both local populations and migrants alike, though for asylum-seekers this is erosive an epitomised by disenfranchisement. The identity of the Other in time becomes absorbed by the asylum-seeker, reinforced by dominant discourse and policy. One such strategy is detention which has Foucauldian (1977) legacies, evoking the punitive potential of

the prison and the 'welfare' provision of the workhouse and the asylum (Malloch and Stanley, 2005: 55). Hage (1998: 105) defines detention as 'ethnic caging', a material manifestation of racialised Othering. Not only does detention contain the Other it also dehumanises and depersonalises them. Staeheli (2011: 394) notes that physical border controls (and I would argue other associated asylum measures such as detention) "are part of a larger dynamic of exclusion and 'othering' that is integral to nation states and the ways that citizenship is often imagined and reinforced through discourses of fear". Paradoxically therefore the active denial and exclusion of those seeking asylum helps to assiduously define and strengthen the citizenship of existing residents.

Debates on Othering are inextricable then from debates on citizenship, indeed the denial of citizenship maintains the exclusion of certain individuals or groups. While historic discourses might once have placed citizenship in direct opposition to statelessness, emphasising the significance of national territory in subjective, political and academic perceptions (Arendt, 1998), contemporary debates endorse a 'mutated citizenship' that is imbricated with globalisation. Ong (2006) observes how certain geographical spaces are imbued with varying degrees of sovereignty, facilitated by fluctuating provisions of political resources for some 'desirable' migrants. Conversely, other spaces such as detention centres remain political resource poor, undermining routes to citizenship. This enhanced 'mutated' or 'flexible' citizenship is not therefore relevant for all, for example forced, destitute or detained migrants who in contrast to more desirable migrants remain undesirable and shunned by society.

Speaking to notions of abjection and Agambian and Foucauldian ideas about power, securitisation, and governmentality, De Genova (2002) deconstructs migrant 'illegality'. He heavily criticises unproblematic investigations of the everyday lives of migrants which, he argues, makes social scientists "in effect, accomplices to the discursive power of immigration law" (423). The problem, De Genova asserts, is that "the treatment of "illegality" as an undifferentiated, transhistorical fixture is, sadly, a reoccurring motif in much of the scholarship on migration" (431) and which constitutes a "central epistemological and conceptual problem, with significant methodological ramifications, ethical implications and political repercussions" (423). The answer to this problem is an acknowledgement, not only that 'illegality' is a social construction that is historically specific, but that it is rooted in law which is not definitive, coherent and complete. De Genova expresses concern that the unproblematic acceptance of immigration law (in particular overlooking the fact that law is tactically employed by nation states) is to remain blind to the role of 'illegality' in the categorisation and production of subjects in society. Whilst this is relevant to those who are undocumented, this

speaks also to the discussion above of abjection and how the othering of non-citizens perpetuates “monolithic normative notions of national identity for citizens themselves” (425).

A key political strategy employed as part of the arsenal of state control in the construction of “illegal” subject is ‘deportability’, or the threat of deportation. De Genova (2002) endorses an ethnographic approach to understanding how the everyday lives of undocumented migrants are often profoundly defined by their deportability which, ultimately, results in the “revocability of the promise of the future” (Carter 1997: 196 cited in De Genova, 2002). In his later work, De Genova with Peutz (2010) interrogates how the normative construction of migrants as ‘deportable’ has become critical in how nation states respond to ‘irregular’ migration and how this constitutes fundamental acts of sovereign power. Through a convergence of theoretical and empirical (ethnographic) sources, their edited book draws together and sheds light upon the real life consequences of deportability, which is defined as the enduring potential for deportation. Crucially, De Genova and Peutz problematise deportation as a legitimate, administrative response to migration and trace connections between the role of deportation and global capitalism. Taking an ethnographic perspective, they also examine the experiences of individuals living in protracted, uncertain circumstances and the consequences of this including the negotiation of conflicting subjectivities for individuals dealing with the threat, or with the aftermath of, deportation. De Genova’s 2002 paper calls for greater recognition of the wider conjunctures between “illegality” and the racialisation and nativism of deportable individuals, and the spatialisation of these statuses, especially through an examination of the significance of geographical borders.

Whilst there is consensus that ‘deportability’ is employed by nation states to legitimise the policing of public space, the subjection of migrants to surveillance and varying tactics of repression amongst other interventions (De Genova 2002), authors also recognise ‘deportability’ as a form of political subjectivity which has instigated new ‘forms of mobilisation’ (Anderson et al 2011 cited in McGregor 2012). McGregor (2012), for example, examines the role of religious activities amongst African detainees in the UK. She suggests that whilst the rising threat of deportation amongst migrant groups has resulted in “precarious and uncertain conditions without basic rights” and has “implied abjection”, those living without status in her study were “often far from passive in accepting this condition (cf McGregor, 2008), as they actively performed their religious membership, cultivated faithful sensibilities and alternate notions of belonging that worked to counter its affective and emotional force” (244). This suggests that conceptualisations of deportability offers a more nuanced position from which to understand migrants’ lived experiences, one that also accommodates acts of

resilience. This can be seen to directly counter the depoliticising characteristics of Agamben's biopolitics, giving voice to diverse and heterogeneous migrant acts and experiences undergirded by varying degrees of political intent.

Agamben has also been heavily criticised by feminists for his neglect of the gendered dimension of sovereign abandonment (Mills, 2004: 58). This is most demonstrably conveyed through the undifferentiated figure of the homo sacer. Mitchell (2006: 97-98) argues that Agamben's constitution of this historical 'universal', stripped-down white male body overlooks the contemporary exclusions that occur on the basis of race, gender and sexuality which are biologically grounded and key to the ontologising of certain groups. Crucially, this results in the embodiment of exceptionalism, marking a key distinction between the conceptualisations of feminist and poststructuralist scholars and those of Agamben. Agamben's tendencies for generalisability have also been disparaged by feminists and the consequent oversight of the intimate, gendered reality of real-life exclusion and scope for demonstrations of resilience, resistance and agency by excluded Others (Coleman, 2007a, Mountz, 2011, Mountz, 2013). As such, Mountz (2011) endorses transnational feminist projects that expand discursive conceptualisations of exceptionalism that seek nuanced insights into how exclusion is contrived and experienced through finer scales of the body and everyday spaces such as the home.

Feminist geographers therefore have much to offer the expansion of existing thinking of sovereign abandonment. Efforts to paint a contemporary picture of differentiated and spatially located homo sacers include Sanchez's (2004) work on the banishment caused by 'prostitution-free' zones in Portland, Oregon and Pratt's (2005) considerations of the death of sex workers in Vancouver. Pratt identifies the import of gender in constituting the homo sacer through the imposition of heteronormative norms. She suggests that home may be complicit in the perpetuated exclusion of some women, citing the example of live-in domestic workers for whom the home remained a private, deregulated site of proximity to employers. The home has therefore remained of keen interest, which I suggest holds productive potential for augmenting male dominant discourses with a gendered perspective.

## 2.2 Critical geographies of home

Over recent years geographical interest with 'home' has gained momentum. Cultural geographers have investigated home alongside geographies of emotions, gender, sexuality, housing, identity, empire and transnationality (Duncan and Lambert, 2004). Conceptually and in practice these

considerations have been deeply geographical even by those residing outside the discipline. In their seminal book, Blunt and Dowling (2006: 22) lay the ground for a critical geography of home through which home is defined as material and imaginative, and a nexus of place, space, identity, scale and power. First and foremost this recognises that home is not just a material site of dwelling but one imbued with emotions and a sense of belonging or 'feeling at home' (Al-Ali and Koser, 2004). Secondly, it acknowledges the domestic as a "locus of personality, belonging and meaning to which people are differently positioned, and differentially experience according to age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class" (Brickell, 2012b: 226). Thirdly, home operates on multiple scales and may afford insights into other social, political and cultural processes. Indeed one of geography's unique contributions to interdisciplinary discourses of the home has been the recognition of its multi-scaled complexity. Crucially, feminists have heavily criticised the normalisation of women's place in the home and simultaneous 'tuning out' of women's voices within geographic research (Rose, 1993). Although traditionally perceived as a safe haven of comfort and rejuvenation (Tuan, 2004) for many home remains a site of oppression where women can be disempowered, marginalised and vulnerable to abuse (Ahrentzen, 1997). Feminists have deconstructed public/private binaries on which work/home dualisms are based, arguing that not only are these spheres gendered and interdependent they are also a product of geographical and historical contexts (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Doreen Massey (1995: 494) reiterates that temporally and spatially home (and work) are porous. The supposition that domestic space merely constitutes homeliness, privacy and security has also been contested by research which investigates the intersection of the domestic with issues of age, class, gender, race and sexuality (Gorman-Murray, 2007, Varley, 2008, Meah, 2013). In the following sub-sections I engage with key registers of home which are particularly pertinent to my research.

### *2.2.1 Political discourses of home*

While home is certainly material and imaginary, it is also deeply political (Brickell, 2012b). It is inscribed with heteronormative ideals which are instrumental in expounding what is homely or not, endorsing or rejecting (in)appropriate identities and including or excluding individuals, relationships or objects (2008, Gorman-Murray, 2007, Blunt and Dowling, 2006). These values are namely middle-class, the nuclear family and heterosexuality, which remain politically powerful as they entreat certain ideals reinforced by policy and political ideologies (Oswin, 2010). The criticality of home is also revealed within political and academic engagements with immigration, citizenship and 'homeland' security. Political rhetoric and policy employed by nation states is conceptually underpinned by home to effectively appeal to public sentiment and strengthen political support.

This is revealed in US politics of 'homeland security' since 9/11 (Manning, 2003) which has seen the reframing of the 'nation-as-home', legitimising measures taken to protect it from external threats as one might protect a familial, domestic home. Reconfigurations of the 'homeland' have consequences as they replace traditionally mobile and limitless images of American nationhood with a bounded imaginary in need of protection (Kaplan, 2003: 85). Kaplan suggests that the 'homeland' is thus constructed by and dependent upon the threat of a foreign and external Other, speaking to the Othering framework problematised above.

This theoretical shift is not isolated to the US, in fact Walters (2004) notes the centrality of home to the UK White Paper entitled *Secure Borders, Safe Havens* (Home Office, 2002). The White Paper seeks to simultaneously enhance immigration and asylum controls post 9/11 while improving community cohesion and experiences of citizenship. Walters proposes that at the core of this lies a domopolitical agenda which reinscribes the relations between citizenship, state, and territory; "[i]t rationalizes a series of security measures in the name of a particular conception of home [...] The home as hearth [...] as our place, where we belong naturally [...] home as a place we must protect" (Walters, 2004: 241). Gedalof (2007) observes that the White Paper endorses a shared citizenship in order to avoid conflict and facilitate the integration of newcomers. While ostensibly presented as a mutual responsibility between home-citizens and migrants, the negotiation of difference required to meet this end is led chiefly by 'native' interests and foregrounded by their own pursuit of identity, ironically strengthened through their relationality with foreign others (Tyler, 2006).

Walters (2004) argues that crucially, this domopolitical framework criminalises any activity or individual deemed a threat. This reinforces what is 'ours' and undergirds pre-emptive action with a moral right to uphold and protect 'our home' from intrusion, attack or threat. Accordingly, the 'domestic' remains key to highlighting difference and the nation-as-home as an important catalyst for strengthening a criminalisation agenda. Detention remains of strategic importance for protecting the 'homeland' from the threat of intrusion despite the implicit, and sometimes illegal, curtailing of liberty for those who are detained. Other measures include house-raids not dissimilar to anti-guerrilla paramilitary activity prevalent in authoritarian regimes, legitimised as a response to the perceived threat of migrants to the community (Valdez, 2010). While some research supports that tackling illegal immigration remains a priority for UK populations (Singer and Massey, 1998), others offer a different perspective. Hagelund (2003) notes that a general discord with politics may be harnessed by political parties to support their own agendas. Black (2003) argues that politicians, with the help of the media, may fuel associations between criminality and immigration to generate

support for more stringent immigration strategies which ultimately signals a shift away from a human rights approach in favour of a state-motivated international relations discourse that prioritises homeland security. This highlights a renewed commitment to protect host populations rather than those individuals seeking asylum. While the contemporary magnification of a homeland discourse arose in particular response to 9/11, some argue the reconfiguration of the nation in this manner has only propagated insecurity and relies upon a perpetual state of emergency (Agamben, 1998, 2005).

Not only do representations of the state-as-home legitimise the strengthening of secure borders it also justifies the expansion beyond these geographical parameters, infiltrating other domains such as the home (Valdez, 2010). In an interesting juxtaposition, Ahmad (2002) found that increasing race attacks on Muslim women in the UK post-9/11 provoked their marginalisation and necessitated a reshaping of women's domestic homes as places to seek refuge from assault. Domicide relates to the deliberate destruction of home by human agency. The significance of domicile for migrants is underscored when home is understood as "more than a material object" that "consists of imagination, routinized everyday practices, relationship networks, and representation imbued with personal and social meaning, cultural ideals, and values" (Butcher, 2010: 24-25). Given this complexity, the loss of home for many migrants is equally multifarious from loss of identity, broken social networks and insecurity (Porteous and Smith, 2001). Indeed, Papadopoulos (2002: 18) notes that for migrants the loss of home with its material, sentimental and psychological components has powerful consequences and can result in a "deep sense of a gap, a fissure, a hole, an absence, a lack of confidence in one's own existence and consequently in 'reading life' which leads to a particular kind of frozenness". Of course in some cases the loss of migrant homes through displacement might itself result from other nation states taking measures they equally deem legitimate to protect 'their own'. It remains ironic then that contemporary and historic endeavours to create a homeland has rendered indigenous and migrant populations homeless, dispossessed or relegated to distinctly unhomey homes (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Attempts to police secure boundaries through domopolitics can therefore lead to the infiltration of migrant homes, the destruction of safe spaces and thwarting of individual capacities to build home and engage in homemaking practices. This highlights how political discourse is augmented with key concepts of home and the implicit and ubiquitous consequences for migrants and established host-born populations alike, intersecting on different scales, from the nation-as-home, the domestic and imagined homes. I now turn to consider the import of transnational home to the migratory narratives of migrants themselves.

### 2.2.2 *Transnational homes*

Geographical proponents have deliberated over where and what is home for migrants and how home is thus created (Ahmed et al., 2003). There is consensus that the multiplicity and complexity of home is most poignant for migrants, tied to “notions of dependency, interdependence and autonomy, continuity and dis/location” and be it “defined as a dwelling, a homeland, or even a constellation of relationships, is represented as a spatial and relational realm from which people venture into the world and to which they generally hope to return” (Mallett, 2004: 77). Embedded within these deliberations, and of pertinence to this research, are key debates of transnationality. This resonates with concepts of the homeland, indeed Walter (2002: 206) defines diaspora as “feeling ‘at home’ in the area of settlement while retaining significant identification outside it”. Key transnational debates are inextricable from considerations of how home is made and experienced. Indeed, because critics have characterised transnationality by the loss, pursuit and negotiation of multiple homes over time and space, this has demanded a reconsideration of what constitutes home for migrants within the context of competing allegiances (Al-Ali and Koser, 2004). Multiscalar interpretations are especially germane as migrants’ negotiate home from the physical dwelling, home-based daily practices and relationships with material belongings, while consisting also of conceptual and emotional imaginaries of the domestic, community and diaspora (Blunt and Varley, 2004). Furthermore, Blunt and Dowling (2006: 199) observe that migrants’ lived experiences and spatial imaginaries are intersections of home, memory, identity and belonging which never exist in a vacuum and are relational and aspirational.

Geographers propose that a transnational approach to migration transcends the confines of conventional boundaries and tracks flows and connections through the cultural transfer of identities, people, information and currency through space (Crang et al., 2003, Hyndman and Walton-Roberts, 2000). Transnationalism has therefore disrupted concepts of home as fixed, singular and stable (Blunt and Dowling, 2006) with contemporary interpretations highlighting its mobile nature (Ahmed et al., 2003, Long, 2013). Indeed, Gilroy (Sirriyeh, 2010, 1993 cited in) has noted a shift from a focus on the ‘roots’ of home to the ‘routes’ of home. Others however warn against overinflating the mobile characterisation of transnationalism. Dunn (2010: 1) recommends an embodied approach as “a powerful corrective to the dangers of exaggerating mobility and footloosedness” which promises to uncover the complex negotiations of so-called ‘transnationals’. Endorsing a nuanced perspective, Ahmed et al (2003: 1) note that “being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached”.

Geographical work on transnationalism has usefully highlighted the multiplicity of migratory experiences and ways that home is constructed, perceived and experienced by those who migrate. Dunn (2008) observes that migrants from the same cultural group but in different settings may have distinctly disparate experiences for place-specific reasons, such as the efficiency of diasporic communities. Contemporary discussions of transnationality concur that migrants are “embedded in, identify with, and participate in multiple communities, and are not just, nor even primarily, anchored in one national collectivity” (Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006: 1593). This demands a negotiation of multiple homes, disrupting straightforward relationships between people and place and impacts upon identity, the meaning of territory and citizenship (Sassen, 2005, Ong, 2006, Conradson and McKay, 2007). These accounts demand a reframing of home from something one ‘leaves behind’ to the multiple (real or imagined) destinations that migrants encounter (Clifford, 1997). Transnationality has thus been described as a new type of migrant experience with consequences for feelings of belonging (Butcher, 2010). Transnational space cannot therefore be cordoned off and essentialised, as transnationality imbues the very perspective from which the world is viewed and engaged.

While influential, there are proponents who question the broader applicability of a transnational approach and its contribution beyond academic debates. Portes (2003) warns that fetishising migrants’ transnational participation risks obscuring more commonplace, non-transnational activities. This is interesting given feminist geographers’ concern with the ‘everyday’ and how these constitute transnational home (Dyck, 2005b). However, by examining “the links between migration, communication, cultural exchange, and subjectivity” (Dunn, 2010: 3), a transnational framework usefully challenges assimilationist conventions of former migration policy and research (Berry, 1997). This endorses a holistic awareness of mobility within migratory narratives and a critical engagement with how space is shaped, experienced and theorised. This also contests historic interpretations of space through which migrants passively pass, are pushed to or pulled by and challenges assumptions about the primacy of the receiving country.

Having dealt so far with the political and transnational registers of home, I now scale down to examine feminist geographers’ engagements with the embodied, everyday geographies of home.

### *2.2.3 Embodied, everyday geographies of home*

The past two decades has seen an abundance of geographical literature concerned with the ‘everyday’, particularly by feminists who have equally endorsed qualitative methodologies that

complement these aims. Dyck (2005b) argues that as daily practices are constituted by the interaction of place and individual, the everyday exposes local and global processes, uncovering how experiences of home are lived, contested and experienced through the body. Similarly, Winchester et al (2003: 156–173 cited in, Dunn, 2010) observe, “[l]ike other landscapes, bodies can be read as outcomes of social process (as objects or outcomes), they can be seen as sites of action and resistance (agency), or they can be seen as the negotiated space between social processes and action”. Furthermore, Casey (2001: 688) notes;

“The body not only goes out to reach places; it also bears the traces of the places it has known. These traces are continually laid down in the body, sedimenting themselves there and thus becoming formative of its specific somatography [...] The reverse is true: places are themselves altered by our having been in them”.

This suggests that experiences of place continue to resound within new places (homes) through embodied practices and through the hybrid identities thus formed.

Casey’s conceptualisations speak to Heidegger’s (1971) theorisation of place-attachment which endorses a holistic approach to understanding how the body is placed in and relates to the world, notably to ‘dwellings’. This attempts to deconstruct the Cartesian dualism on which social theory is based (Walsh, 2006b). Just as logical thought, culture and strength became affiliated with masculinity, all things weak, emotional and embodied became inherently feminine (Valentine, 2001). Heidegger endorses a fusing of mind and body which he suggests affords a deep connection to place and is essential to truly ‘being in the world’ (Harvey, 1996). These dwellings may be understood as homes, sites which are constructed through the repeated layering of memory, association and encounter (Relph, 1989: 26-29 cited in, Easthope, 2004). These scholars persuasively endorse the embodied scale as an evocative access point to located lived experience and raises pertinent questions for those like migrants who have encountered multiple homes and been incarcerated in detention. To what extent for example are the embodied ‘traces’ of detention felt beyond release from the physical confines or indeed how might encounters with secure past homes help ameliorate the challenges of less homely homes in the UK? One might suggest that spaces and experiences of detention may become embroiled with and indistinct from spaces of home and associated identities. Undoubtedly then, the embodied scale affords fresh perspectives on everyday experiences of place.

While feminists have argued that an everyday lens helps keep women visible in academic discourses, finer scales of the everyday such as the body or the domestic have been neglected within migratory scholarship (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Indeed, Pratt and Yeoh (2003: 160) note that “if there is a

common thread to feminist criticisms of academic writing on transnationalism, it is their admonishment to pay much closer attention to the particular and the concrete specificity of daily experience". While migration constitutes the movement of bodies through space, engagements with the body-as-scale have been notably lacking by macro population movement perspectives (Dunn, 2010). Neoclassical geographical engagements have been disparaged for representing migrants as "disembodied actors responding rationally to economic forces" detached from "corporeal experience as it is infused with social meaning" (Silvey, 2004: 494). Feminist geographers have thus (re)engaged with the body as an evocative access point to these lived experiences. Moreover, the implications of immigration control are arguably most emphatically 'witnessed' through an embodied lens with large-scale viewpoints eschewing real-life, human consequences. Key examples are detention practices, mobility of bodies as part of asylum policy and surveillance (Bailey et al., 2002).

An embodied approach to migration is not however to detract from broader political influences. Indeed, Blunt (2007: 685) observes that research concerned with the embodied materialities of migrant mobilities is unevenly distributed and inseparable from the politics of mobility and migration "both in terms of the legal frameworks that regulate migration, and in terms of the embodied politics of identity and difference that span gender, 'race' and ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality, age and religion". For Dunn (2010: 2), the holistic potential of a transnational paradigm is maximised through an embodied approach by traversing dichotomised distinctions i.e. agency/structure and constructionist/essentialist on which traditional migratory investigations may rely. This resonates with research on the politicised space of transnational homes and how global inequalities may play out within the domestic arena, such as for female domestic workers (Blunt, 2005, Pratt, 1999).

While geographers agree that home is not bounded or fixed (Blunt and Varley, 2004) engaging with domestic everyday space is of keen interest. In 1998, Domosh noted a burgeoning of feminist work on the domestic which aspired to access women's everyday experiences of home. This trend continues with investigations of the gendered dimension of domestic space, tied up with issues of housework, social relationships and domestic activities (Supski, 2006, Meah and Jackson, 2012, Meah, 2013). Imrie's (2004) spatial interrogation of how disability reconfigures relationships with homespace disrupts normative accounts of home as a site of comfort as his disabled participants' bodies were 'at odds' with the material home. Imrie recommends that we "'corporealise' the meaning of the home, in which conceptions of domestic life become underpinned by an

understanding of the interactions between a person's bodily or physiological condition and their patterns of behaviour in the domestic environment" (746).

There is a vast body of geographic work concerned with food and the home, not least those concerned with the evocation of home through visual, tactile and olfactory stimuli (Law, 2001, Longhurst et al., 2008, Duruz, 2010, Hayes-Conroy, 2010). Supski (2006: 134) notes that the identities inscribed and maintained through the home are complex and may be "embodied in a lived reality that often differs from the dominant notions of these identities". This demands a polyvalent understanding that acknowledges home as a site on which traditionally hegemonic values and associated stereotypes may be contested. Blunt and Dowling (2006: 217) also argue that "food's relationship to transnational forms of home is multiple". Engagements with cooking and eating practices may therefore expose home less as a sedentary point of tradition and more a cultural hybrid. Furthermore it can resituate and reconstitute diasporic subjects by enabling migrant bodies to feel 'at home' (Longhurst et al., 2009b: 340).

Other embodied investigations of home have highlighted how sensory experiences such as olfactory stimuli may become nodes of memory, evoking embodied connections to other past, transnational homes (Pink, 2004). Longhurst et al (2009a: 334) propose a 'visceral approach' which refers to "the sensations, moods and ways of being that emerge from our sensory engagement with the material and discursive environments in which we live [...] paying attention to the senses – sight, sound, touch, smell and taste". They suggest that an embodied approach helps glean micro-geographical insights which make up migratory experiences (new languages, textures, sounds), underscoring migrants' differentiated accounts and their evocative pursuit of home. This highlights the intersection of migrants with the material home, something I develop in the next sub-section.

#### *2.2.4 Material geographies of home*

The 'material turn' within geographic has seen work on domestic architecture and design, the cultures of material objects and the spatiality of domestic visual cultures within the home (Blunt, 2005). Other work suggests that material possessions are inscribed with 'estate agency' and are instrumental in the formation of identities and aspirations (Datta, 2008, Miller, 2001). Gorman-Murray (2008) describes how men's identities are shaped through homemaking practices, initiating a dynamic and reciprocal process as layers of meaning are built up through practices, fused by the "accumulation and arrangement of personally meaningful objects" (369). The positioning and utilisation of objects therefore facilitates the development of habits, roles and routines in everyday

life on which we depend for stability and daily purpose (Young, 1997 cited in, Varley, 2008). Homes in turn become physical representations of personal narratives with material possessions becoming an extension of identity, representing material fragments of self which can be manipulated, reordered and reconciled (Gorman-Murray, 2007).

While material belongings imbue home with meaning, Long (2013) is critical, particularly of Young's (1997) exclusive focus on the domestic which overlooks larger-scale perspectives of homemaking and domesticity afforded by work on migrants' transnational practices. Long notes "that to exclude metaphor, symbolism and imagination of material spaces and objects forecloses expanded notions of home that go beyond the nation" and that while "material spaces and objects comprising home may be located in a particular place, they speak to places, memories and senses of belonging over larger distances" (334). Similarly, Tolia-Kelly (2004) observes how religious iconography and family photographs evoke 'remembered geographies' while strengthening multifaceted transnational accounts of home. Tolia-Kelly (2004b: 685) notes that "[t]hese visual cultures operate beyond the mode of the visual, incorporating embodied memories of past landscapes and relationships with pre-migratory lives in colonial territories". Walsh's (2006) research with expatriates in Dubai has explored the materialisation of belonging at a domestic scale. She reveals that home is created in spite of mobility and that past, present and future homes are drawn together through domestic practice and material objects. Walsh draws interesting parallels between 'belongings' and 'belonging', suggesting that for migrants these are co-contingent (139). In the next section I take up the issue of belonging and 'feeling at home' in some more depth.

#### *2.2.5 Geographies of belonging and 'feeling at home'*

Easthope (2004: 135) asserts that "[w]hile homes may be located, it is not the location that is 'home'. Instead, homes can be understood as 'places' that hold considerable social, psychological and emotive meaning for individuals and for groups". This highlights the emotional dimension of home which intersects with identity and belonging. Indeed conceptually, belonging draws out the emotive qualities of home as it represents a yearning for attachment to place or people. Citing Probyn (1996), Mee and Wright (2009: 772) argue that 'belonging' is inherently geographical as it translates in essence to 'being in place'. Echoing this, Bell (1999: 1 cited in, Walsh, 2006) notes that the affective dimension of identity is underscored through the word "belonging" as it is "not just being, but longing". The imbrication of home, belonging and identity is therefore acknowledged as they involve the location and identification of self through attachments to place (Loader, 2006). This is complex however as home and identity are multiple, and so therefore is belonging (Blunt and Varley,

2004) particularly for migrants for whom the emotional geographies of home are also constituted through memories of past homes. Indeed, Hall (1990: 225 cited in, Long, 2013) argues that cultural identity is about 'becoming' as much as 'being' and transcends place, time, history and culture. Antonsich (2010: 645) differentiates between 'place-belongingness' and a 'politics of belonging', with the former representing an individual 'feeling at home' and the latter a discursive resource that may contest forms of exclusion.

Mee and Wright (2009) categorise geographical research on belonging into work on; place(s) of belonging (Nelson and Hiemstra, 2008, McCreanor et al., 2006); site(s) of belonging (Dyck, 2005b, Tolia-Kelly, 2006, Witten et al., 2007); space(s) of belonging (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2012, Valentine and Skelton, 2007, Nelson, 2007); territory(s) of belonging (Tolia-Kelly, 2006); and landscape(s) of belonging (Tolia-Kelly, 2006, Trudeau, 2006). Belonging and home are co-dependent as revealed through literature on transnationalism and homemaking practices (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, Mee and Wright, 2009, Mee, 2009, Tolia-Kelly, 2006, 2008), and both operate on multiple scales and across time and space, demanding a negotiation of multiple positionalities (Mallett, 2004, Akinwumi, 2006, Binaisa, 2011). As belonging is not isolated to the house-as-home geographers have also explored feeling 'at home' to other spaces such as the city (Kern, 2005). Norwicka (2007) notes professional migrants' management of spatial distance through relationships with home and their routinised practices, enabling them 'feel at home' in multiple places. Others note that home may be employed to manage feelings of insecurity and difference engendered through displacement, whilst also strengthening belonging. Butcher (2010: 33) suggests that establishing new homes may alleviate "affective responses to difference; maintaining a valued, familiar link between home and expressions of identity; and the need to prioritise 'finite' mental and physical resources to manage relocation". Moreover, negotiating difference is often best achieved when 'expressions of identity' situated in the home are maintained, corroborating the geographical assertion that identity and place are inextricable; certainly that identity is contingent on emotional interaction with place (Easthope, 2004).

This section has provided an overview of the vast geographical literature on home, whilst maintaining a focus on the experiences of migrants. In the final section I unpack the geographies of health and wellbeing, which remain of key interest to my research.

### 2.3 Geographies of health and wellbeing

Augmenting their 1948 definition which first inaugurated 'wellbeing', the World Health Organisation (2001: 1) contemporaneously define health as, "a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". This has reconceptualised wellbeing less in terms of disease and ill-health and more as a positive resource from which individuals may draw to lead healthy, balanced lives. Health geographies have also undergone a paradigm shift which has rejected the biomedical model in favour of a holistic socio-ecological model of health which acknowledges the multifarious interaction of physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, environmental and societal factors (Williams, 2002: 149). Scholars have recognised therefore the co-dependency of mental and physical health (Butler and Parr, 1999). This holistic focus is also reflected in health geography's sub-disciplines. Wolch and Philo (2000) track the burgeoning of geographical work on mental health over the past 40 years. This acknowledges social and spatial parameters decided by the 'healthy' or 'normal' population which results in the exclusion of the 'mad other', fossilised in material and emotional landscapes which marginalise those with mental health problems and disrupt their social inclusion, identities and belonging (Parr et al., 2004). Wolch and Philo (2000: 144) observe that while geographies of difference and exclusion are ostensibly conceived in terms of class, race, ethnicity and gender these are rarely envisioned with regards to the axis of mental (ill)health. This highlights the multiple registers of difference that migrant populations encounter.

Given the limitations of biomedical models, wellbeing offers an alternative framework. Theoretically, Fleuret and Atkinson note that wellbeing has been underpinned by three distinct approaches; a theory of needs, relative standards theory, and the capabilities approach. While influential, Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of need has been criticised as simplistic because the significance of indicators such as income or access to healthcare on which it relies are perceived differentially (Diener and Lucas, 2000). In response, a relative standards theory has treated wellbeing as relative and subjective which means that "a change in objective living conditions does not necessarily translate into a change in the level of happiness" (Schyns, 1998: 7 cited in, Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007). Whilst affording nuanced perspectives of wellbeing, this approach is equally flawed in its inapplicability to policy which relies upon broader evaluations. Traversing these two divergent perspectives, Sen (1993) proposes an approach which encompasses "substantive, objective descriptors for the dimensions of human wellbeing alongside a space for historical, cultural and personal specifications" (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007: 109). Sen suggests that individuals possess

capabilities which are attainable and valuable functionings, including skills and power. This approach remains of particular geographical relevance because places can facilitate or undermine the translation of these individual capabilities into attained functionings. Unsurprisingly Sen has also received criticism, not least problems of operationalising and measuring 'capabilities' (Gasper, 1997).

Fleuret and Atkinson (2007: 107) suggest that wellbeing offers geographers key conceptual advantages in light of its breadth of application across different social and spatial contexts and the potential to shed light on the multifarious factors which promote, remedy or regenerate (ill)health. They assert that these variations and expressions of health may broaden discussions of policy goals, and their formulation and implementation. Potentials aside, wellbeing remains relatively neglected by geographers and while advantageous, wellbeing remains problematic not least because conceptualising, measuring and assessing it is less straightforward than other indicators such as disease. Within the literature the terms; happiness, quality of life, subjective wellbeing, objective wellbeing are often used interchangeably which indicates some confusion. Challenges aside, the breadth of applicability also highlights a dynamic potential so long as certain measures are taken. These include working iteratively between embodied, societal and global scales; employing a range of research approaches; and exploring the impact of different settings, from public space to the home (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007).

While work on wellbeing is sparse, other scholarship by health geographers which emphasises the embodied and emotional dimensions of health remains of pertinence. This includes ethnographic research which investigates the embodied and contested subjectivities of people living with mental health problems, which geographers argue is imperative for understanding subtle, everyday experiences and the disruption to 'intimate social and spatial worlds' (Parr, 2000, Parr, 1998). Davidson (2000a, 2000b) draws on Merleau-Ponty's (1962) conceptualisations of 'objective' and 'lived' space in her research with women with agoraphobia. Lived space is mediated through the body, "the vehicle of being in the world" through which an individual is "intervolved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 82 cited in, Davidson, 2000a). Importantly, this lived space often described as 'homely' is fundamental to mental health as it foregrounds a sense of belonging; without it we are outsiders and spatially destitute. These spatial parameters suggest that 'being in the world' is established through an embodied, proprioceptive and emotional negotiation which may become distorted as a result of mental illness, experienced as a surreal disconnection from the body and

immediate surroundings. Furthermore the difficulties that people with agoraphobia have in negotiating social space is characterised by the fragmentation of the 'inner' self and the 'outer' world (641). Davidson (2000a) suggests that for these woman the physical boundaries of home became an extension of the self, offering security yet simultaneously imprisoning them. These lived experiences highlight the embodied and emotional negotiation with place, space and home and how this may be implicated in health and wellbeing. Developing this further, I turn in the next section to scholarship on emotional geographies from which future work on wellbeing has much to draw.

### *2.3.1 Emotional geographies*

In the early 1970s, Tuan (1974) developed the concept of topophilia which translates as a strong sense or love of place. The past two decades has seen a further 'welling up' of emotional work set on interrogating why 'emotion matters' (Davidson and Milligan, 2004: 524). This growing scholarship has emphasised emotion as an access point to how place and space are 'felt' when located (Anderson and Smith, 2001, Davidson and Bondi, 2004, Davidson et al., 2007, Pile, 2010). Anderson and Smith's (2001) seminal editorial called for research which engages with the "feelings and emotions which make the world as we know and live it" and "an awareness of how emotional relations shape society and space" (9). They note that the historical suppression of emotion eschews a complete understanding of the world's workings and that neglecting emotions is to "exclude a key set of relations through which lives are lived and societies made" (2). Feminist geographers have problematised 'geographies of emotional life', contesting traditional binaries of knowledge which associate the feminine with emotion and rational 'knowing' with the masculine (Bondi, 2005a). There is recognition that emotions are politically infused and remain currencies of power (Pile, 2010, Sharp, 2009). This endorsed contemporary conceptualisations of emotion as contained and subjective, underscoring its intersubjective and interspatial nature. A key example is Pain's work on the geopolitics of fear and the insidiously political features of this emotional metanarrative (Pain, 2008, 2009, 2010, Smith and Pain, 2009).

Bondi (2005a: 442) has endorsed the lessons that emotional geographers may learn from a psychotherapeutic approach, notably the potential to glean emotionally poignant and 'authentic' accounts from individuals "informed by a belief in the human potential for repair and positive self-development". This has however been criticised as idealistic by other proponents who offer an alternative discourse of affect which they suggest offers a less objectifying approach to non-cognitive and/or pre-cognitive emotional life (Pile, 2010: 8). It is argued that geographies of affect may hold the key to 'breaking the spell' of other more dominant work which is supposedly

mesmerised by expressed accounts of emotional life (ibid). Others assert however that jettisoning emotion represents a reinstating of public-private, mind-body dichotomies where emotion is rendered feminine, private and embroiled with the mind in contrast to masculine, political affect usually conceptualised through the more robust entity of the body (Thien, 2005, Bondi, 2005a). Tensions aside, Pile (2010: 10) observes several similarities including their relational ontologies that privilege fluidity; a valuing of proximity and intimacy; and an ethnomethodological predisposition. In her review of Ahmed (2004), Brennan (2004) and Davidson et al's (2007) work on emotion and affect, Lipman (2006) notes that the interest in emotion in geography and beyond has emphasised the relational nature of emotion. This she suggested holds a dual potential; "one examining relationships of power, and one emphasizing a more positive receptivity" (619).

Feminist work on emotion has replaced discursive representations of migration with more comprehensive and nuanced spatial investigations. Speaking of long-term travellers, Molz (2008) proposes the concept of 'global abode' to describe the intersection of mobility, home, and emotion, in particular feelings of belonging to 'anywhere and everywhere'. In their compelling ethnographic research of the emotional geographies of migrant Bahá'í women, Dennis and Warin (2010) illustrate the challenges these women faced in recounting events of terror and trauma. Instead of pursuing verbal accounts the researchers reworked their focus on how violence had 'unmade' the women's worlds but which were also 'remade' through their gendered, everyday home-based practices such as cooking and embroidery. They highlight relationships with 'activity objects' such as embellished cloths that were "vehicles of lived presence and activity, [that] 'thicken' with usage, acquiring the sense of 'habit' and shared contexts" and that are "both corporeal and emotionally laden, mundane and imagined/desired, actual and virtual" (Jayyusi, 2007: 122 cited in, Dennis and Warin, 2010). By engaging at the point at which so-called mundane items intersected with 'habitual and sensual rhythm' the researchers gained privileged insight into the emotional geographies of these women in exile (Dennis and Warin, 2010: 54). This example draws together key ideas covered here and illustrates the deep imbrication of emotion with home and wellbeing.

Geographic work has grappled therefore with the temporality and spatiality of emotions and their location in bodies and places (Burman and Chantler, 2004, Bondi et al., 2007). A body of work concerned with the particular connections between health, place and home has been the therapeutic landscapes literature.

### *2.3.2 Therapeutic landscapes*

With healthcare provision increasingly relocating to the community, the home has been reframed as an important site of care (Williams, 2002). Through interrogations of the health-promoting properties of home, health geographers have drawn from and contributed to scholarship on therapeutic landscapes. Therapeutic landscapes are defined as (non)traditional places imbued with therapeutic properties as a result of physical, cultural and social factors (Gesler, 1992, Conradson, 2005). While early scholarship was concerned with the 'extraordinary' and 'exotic' (1996, Gesler, 1993) a shift is noted towards 'everyday' places and their capacities for healing (Smyth, 2005, Milligan and Bingley, 2007).

These health-promoting properties also speak to the criticality of home in transnational accounts of belonging. While research illustrates the detrimental implications of migration for health and wellbeing, as discussed later in this section, negotiations with home may contest this. Sampson and Gifford (2010: 3) acknowledge the significance of therapeutic landscapes to integration and forging new place-attachments, noting that for refugees, place-making activities may "create landscapes of restoration and renewal, thereby building a sense of belonging and well-being". Place-making activities may therefore facilitate health and wellbeing by making refugees 'feel at home'. Herbert et al (2008) note that social exclusion was managed by migrants' home-based activities and maintaining diasporic connections. These coping strategies utilised social capital; a resource garnered from social networks that elicits in particular capacities for individual and community resilience (Vissandjé et al., 2009). Ritsner et al (1997) observe connections between the strength of social capital, migrants' capacities to feel 'at home' and positive mental health.

Other work reinforces the construction of localised, healthy spaces through daily activities and the impact on the health of those engaging in them; eliciting observations of home as a multi-layered landscape of care (Dyck et al., 2005, Dyck, 2006). Research underscores the importance of 'homely' lived space and a strong 'sense of place' in affording psychological rootedness (DeMiglio and Williams, 2008). Dyck and Dossa (2007) paint a multifaceted picture of how migrant women create home within diasporic space in Canada. While attempts are inhibited by political and material processes, everyday activities such as healing practices and prayer rework the meaning and experience of home. These are situated within the dynamic framework of "material resources and/or cultural knowledge located and constructed within a context of transnational connections and memories of home" (692). This point is reiterated by Dyck (2006) who found migrant women used food and 'traditional' medicines to maintain the health of their families within the home. Dyck

and McLaren (2004) illustrate how identities may become embroiled with home, with perceptions of health remaining tied up with notions of femininity, motherhood and daily practices as migrant women navigate new home environments.

The scholarship highlighted in this section suggests that migrants may be afforded opportunities to mitigate the challenges implicit within migratory experiences by engaging with material and ideological registers of home. This reinforces the home, health and place nexus and illustrates the capacity of migrants to utilise these negotiations. For Williams (2002: 149), therapeutic landscapes conceptually frame this potential, from the social and cultural construction of informal caring in the home and its gendered nature to making sense of the security, stability and sating of basic needs that interactions with home may afford (Casey, 2001). This echoes the paradigm shift within health geography away from interest in the 'medical' in favour of 'health' (Kearns and Moon, 2002). By way of conclusion, I want to return to examine how the health needs of migrants have been discussed within the literature and in doing so draw together the other key areas of work discussed here so far.

### *2.3.3 Migration and health*

There is consensus that migration is implicated in poorer health outcomes than for those who do not migrate (Carballo and Mboup, 2005). This is because migrants are more likely to experience poverty, occupy lower socio-economic statuses, and endure poorer work and living environments (Browning et al., 2003, Elliott et al., 2004, Lorant et al., 2008). Living in new environments may cause physical health problems which exacerbate mental ill-health (Tribe, 2002). Psychosocial pressures faced include struggling to adapt to life in the UK, language barriers and social and economic deprivation frequently perpetuated by racism, discrimination and social exclusion. Many forced migrants will have experienced war, inter-communal conflict and multiple losses of family, income, status and dignity (Palmer, 2006). Detention is particularly erosive for the health of those who have been detained and/or tortured previously, evoking powerful memories which sometimes described as a 'second torture' (Tsangarides, 2012, Burnett and Peel, 2001b). These accumulative factors may precipitate a range of life-limiting experiences including depression, flashbacks, self-harm, fear, anxiety, sleep disturbance, irritability, frustration, and weight loss/gain (Bracken and Gorst-Unsworth, 1991, Silove et al., 2000, Steel and Silove, 2000, Fazel and Silove, 2006).

A key stressor is the lengthy negotiation of the asylum system, each stage posing unique challenges and threats to the health of applicants (Palmer and Ward, 2007). Asylum-seekers are required to

relive traumatic memories on multiple occasions which can exacerbate existing health conditions and induce further stress, triggering new difficulties (Elliott and Gillie, 1998). As Palmer and Ward (2007: 203) observe,

“The lack of control experienced when dealing with the immigration system can encourage feelings of helplessness and despair, diminish an individual’s self-esteem and self-confidence, resulting in a state of ‘learned helplessness’. Individuals can become locked in a pattern where feelings of failure or lack of control make them believe that they are incapable of doing anything to improve their situation”.

This is exacerbated by restricted social mobility, poor living conditions, poverty and destitution. Asylum-seekers can have limited opportunities to form meaningful routines and identities as they await verdicts, factors that are integral to wellbeing and positive mental health (Christiansen, 1999). Refused asylum-seekers remain particularly vulnerable not least because they are rendered destitute by the state and denied healthcare, a move which critics argue flouts international law (Hall, 2006).

While all migrants may be vulnerable, women can be particularly so. Burnett and Peel (2001a) identify that although women may have experienced or be vulnerable to physical assault, sexual harassment, and rape, their experiences and fears have been historically overlooked by the UK asylum system. Displacement often requires a reworking of roles and women may become responsible for education and cultural cohesion, factors which are critical for coping. Integration programmes tend to target men, undermining women’s capacities for independence and self-sufficiency. When families migrate men’s unemployment may create strain, resulting in family-breakdown, domestic abuse or leaving women solely responsible for domestic responsibilities (Wallace, 1993, Lee et al., 2002). Women are less likely to speak English and often experience isolation and marginalisation within the home (Dossa, 2002). They are however more likely than men to seek support for health problems (Burnett and Peel, 2001a). Women’s wellbeing is often entwined with their children, indeed Meadows et al (2001: 1451) note that “[t]he family-centredness of immigrant women's well-being is a mediating factor in all aspects of their health; it is the health of the family unit that is the final point of adjudication for women”. This signals the uniqueness of migrant women’s need and their embroilment with home.

Despite cross-disciplinary consensus that detention and migration are detrimental for health, there is a dearth of geographical literature. In one exception, Warfa et al (2006) observe connections between residential mobility of migrants and poor health. While mobility severs social connections

and undermines community cohesion, it is often provoked by other factors which also undermine health such as inappropriate housing, unemployment/inactivity and material deprivation. In an unusual geographical piece on mental health and detention, McLoughlin and Warin (2008) draw attention to the erosive consequences of marginal locations and physical architecture of detention-spaces which facilitate surveillance and constitute 'anti-places'. The spatial regimentation and perpetual surveillance leaves detainees powerless within a liminal state, "stripped of personhood" and "rendered structurally invisible" (260). Drawing on Agamben's (2005) theorisations these authors propose that locating detention centres at the margins of population dwellings and in abandoned zones elicits feelings of helplessness and desperation for detainees. In an apparent antithesis to therapeutic landscapes, detention centres are identified as destructive spaces with dire implications for mental wellbeing.

While evidence suggests that detainees experience poor health, there is very little research which examines the on-going effect after release, an observation equally true for geography. Martin and Mitchelson (2009) suggest that for ex-detainees the on-going 'spectre' of future detention may endure after release and inhibit capacities to integrate and essentially 'make home', factors which remain integral to on-going wellbeing and may exacerbate existing health problems. In a notable (non-geographical) exception, Bhui (2007: 369) found that the legacy of detention for released foreign prisoners was protracted and observed self-harm as an area of concern. Given the erosive implications of detention for health and wellbeing an engagement with the 'legacy of detention' for health and wellbeing as seen through a geographical lens is urgently needed.

#### 2.4 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview and critically examined the key geographical literature of relevance to this research, identifying some important gaps in the literature to which this research will respond. Geographical scholarship on the geopolitics of detention has highlighted a burgeoning body of work which equally reflects the expansion and diversification of detention practices by nation-states. With some exceptions, a notable absence is a meaningful investigation into the legacies of detention after release, and the impact for individuals and communities alike. An engagement with Agamben's conceptualisations has provided a useful framework for theorising detention practices, speaking to and offering a spatial framework for the construction of the Other (or homo sacer) and the imbrication of citizenship, belonging and identity. While useful for problematising the lives of ex-detainees after release, there are major inadequacies not least a neglect of the gendered dimension of sovereign abandonment and how this intersects with other

axes of difference. This demands an investigation into the accounts of ex-detained women not least because women have also been shown to have unique health needs.

This review has also unpacked the broad geographical scholarship on home and demonstrated that home is central to migrants' experiences. Politically, migrants' everyday lives are influenced by measures taken to protect the nation-as-home not least by detention practices. While fear remains pivotal in contriving the perpetual state of emergency which legitimises these efforts to manage 'deviant' individuals, more could be known about how this fear and indeterminacy is experienced by ex-detainees after release and how the identities associated with detention and uncertain immigration status are negotiated. Having pursued an access point into the lived experiences of ex-detained women, the literature reviewed here suggests that the transnational, embodied, emotional and material registers of home offer great potential to further this project.

This chapter has drawn clear links between home and health, with some proponents (re)framing home as a therapeutic landscape through which migrants might mitigate everyday challenges. These associations suggest that interrogations of home in all its gendered multidimensionality may offer unique insights into the experiences of women post-detention. Having mapped out a route through the existing literature to which this research contributes and draws from, the next chapter outlines the methodology and expands upon how I intend to conduct the research.

Moss (2002: 2), citing Harding (1987: 2-3), asserts that a productive starting point for undertaking feminist research is grasping the three key concepts on which it relies. This includes the epistemological framing concerned with the origin, nature and limits of knowledge production; the methodology as a theory and analysis of how research should proceed; and the methods as techniques used to gather and handle evidence. This chapter addresses each of these concepts in order to unpack the methodological thinking that underpinned this research. I conclude this introduction by briefly outlining the tenets of a feminist epistemology before turning in the first section to outline my original research design. The second section proposes a rationale for taking a narrative approach before moving in the third to discuss the early recruitment challenges, particularly negotiations with gatekeepers. In light of these difficulties, section four outlines the ensuing changes I made to the research design and the implications of these, including additional recruitment, cultural sensitivity, changes to research methods and research setting. Leading on from this discussion, section five and six take up the practicalities of conducting interviews and data analysis, respectively. Section seven considers in some depth issues of reflexivity and positionality, drawing on three key areas of concern; researcher-researched relations, the influence of wider context and factors and the research setting. The chapter draws to close in section eight with a discussion about the ethical implications of undertaking emotionally charged research.

Feminism's still burgeoning 'third wave' has challenged homogeneous representations of women and embraced the contradictions, diversity and conflicts of lived experiences. The influence of postmodern thought has been crucial in reframing knowledge as situated, deconstructing power relations and challenging humanist conceptions of self, agency, power and emancipation (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 85; Braidotti, 1991; Rose, 1997). The notion of situated knowledge has had particular resonance with human geography and its 'cultural turn' (Duncan et al., 2008), speaking to geographers' preoccupation with place and endorsing research into lived experiences in a range of contexts. Underscoring the co-contingency of knowledge and power, Bhavnani (1993: 98) drawing on Haraway (1988), asserts three key guidelines for feminists conducting research. Firstly, research must not be complicit with hegemonic representations that inscribe inequality; secondly there should be an awareness of the micropolitics between researcher and researchers; and thirdly questions of difference should be directly engaged. Amongst other axes of difference within

research settings, race and culture have remained of particular interest to this research as well as amplifying the voices of 'oppressed' women. Dyck et al (1995: 613) warns however of the danger of "researchers, through their construction of 'culture' and race, to unintentionally reaffirm common sense, essentialist notions of socially constructed categories such as race". This highlights that while a sampling strategy may seek to capture diversity, such a strategy relies to some extent upon the construction and adoption of cultural categories. I was simultaneously mindful of this tension whilst also pursuing a culturally sensitive analysis by remaining alert to difference and seeking variegated interpretations to avoid the homogenisation of my respondents' subjectivities. There were however also clear challenges in teasing out common threads whilst also remaining mindful of diversity.

Having abandoned efforts to establish distinctive feminist methods, there is consensus that feminists should do the 'best' research using the most appropriate methods available to them while being led by feminist values (Moss, 2002). Human geography has undergone changes to how qualitative research is "conceived and carried out" with "transformations in the way these methods are being used to make claims to understanding and intervening in the world" (Davies and Dwyer, 2007: 257). While broad, these innovations acknowledge the complexity of life worlds and emphasise openness rather than definitive answers. This is exemplified in research on detention, home and health which has employed multiple methods and techniques, including gathering life stories through interviews, ethnography, written traditions, and visual and material cultures (Parr, 1998; 2000; Blunt and Varley, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Parr, 2007; McLoughlin and Warin, 2008; Dennis and Warin, 2010). These methods have also afforded insights into the positionalities of migrants and their imaginings and practices of citizenship (Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006: 1616). This resonates with, and has arguably been augmented by, narrative research, particularly the experience-centred approach which I decided to adopt and which I go on to unpack later in this chapter. Research undertaken by health geographers investigating mental health has noted, for example, the appropriateness of embodied, ethnographic research methods as "to recognize alternative time-space networks, and to be sensitive to different forms of behaviour in specific social spaces, may mean a need for different trajectories of (perhaps unspoken) intersubjectivity in research relations" (Parr, 1998: 29). Parr (1998b) asserts that geographic work on mental health is augmented through research methodologies which reveal real 'voices and faces'. To this end, I outline in the next section my original research design.

### 3.1 Original research design

My original research design relied primarily upon in-depth interviews with ex-detained women that sought their personal narratives of life beyond incarceration in UK Immigration Removal Centres (IRC). Given my overarching interest with a critical geography of home, I initially hoped to meet with participants on multiple occasions and, where possible, in their 'homes'. This was not to assume positive connections, only that recording narratives concerned with home, while located in these home-spaces, promised greater insights into situated, lived experience. Research which takes a narrative approach has traditionally utilised interviews to elicit the life stories of participants, particularly in "developing new frameworks and theories based on women's lives and women's formulations" (Anderson and Jack, 1991: 18). Feminists have also endorsed the use of interviews, indeed Dyck et al (1995: 612) observe that "the in-depth interview [is] a complex social situation which is unpredictable and underwritten by relations of power between researcher and 'researched'". This suggests that while in-depth interviews may afford valuable insights, they should not be entered into lightly or blindly, speaking to feminist values which infuse not just the topic or subject group but the 'doing' of the research (McDowell, 1992).

My original research design sought to interview approximately 30 women over the age of 18 years who had been detained in a UK IRC for any length of time and at any stage within the past ten years. I intended to recruit them through a London-based women's charity with which I was involved as a volunteer. At this early stage I did not anticipate interviewing charity workers as my main focus was the experiences of women who had been detained and their lives beyond release. From the outset I budgeted to offer participants a voucher as a 'thank you' for their participation in the research. In order to remain in touch with my active role throughout the process and the transformative nature of research for all involved, the research design was underpinned by a reflexive approach. I planned to develop field notes and a research diary to document my emotional and embodied accounts and 'internal dialogue' (Anderson and Jack, 1991; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994).

In addition to the in-depth interviews, I was also initially keen to undertake participant observation within the 'home' that participants resided in, use photo-elicitation and/or participatory video methods. The latter two would have involved giving participants (video) cameras to record aspects of their daily lives. Ethnographic research, often relying to varying degrees on participant observation, is well recognised as an evocative, yet contested, access point to the lived experience of individuals. Photo-elicitation has also been shown to be effective when working with disadvantaged or marginalised groups to derive "subject-driven, nuanced understandings" which

“challenge or negotiate existing dominant discourses about migrant and ethnic minority populations” (Ortega-Alcázar & Dyck, 2012: 110). Kindon (2003: 142), endorses the use of participatory video which, when employed sensitively, can “destabilize hierarchical power relations and create spaces for transformation by providing a practice of looking ‘alongside’ rather than ‘at’ research subjects”. Others, including Brickell (2012), have also underscored the capacity of video methodologies to evoke knowledges produced by (rather than about) marginalised groups.

In line with a feminist epistemology, a narrative approach has been utilised within qualitative research to glean researcher narratives and the life-stories of research participants (Kearns, 1997). Having outlined the original research design, I turn in the next section to discuss the narrative approach that I adopted, my reasons for this and its application.

### 3.2 A rationale for a ‘narrative approach’

Narrative research is complex. Trahar (2009: 1) observes that narrative research is not merely the “uncritical gathering of stories” but an endeavour that attends “to the ways in which a story is constructed, for whom and why, as well as the cultural discourses that it draws upon”. Narratives are imbued with multiple meanings, may be used, constructed and interpreted for different purposes and in different ways. When narrating the past we inevitably speak from a particular retrospective vantage point, one that revises and adapts events in response to our audience, the context and what at the time is deemed ‘(un)tellable’. To this end, narratives are not the route to authentic ‘truths’, nor can they exist outside of broader discourses. Furthermore, memory is both selective and largely dependent upon our present contexts and the discourses in which we are situated and influenced by. Indeed, the narrative field of knowledge production underscores the dynamic interchange between experience and expression and the distinction between life as lived, experienced and told (Bruner, 1991). This is because while experience informs narratives, experience relies on the retrospective telling to be given meaning (Polkinghorne 1995, Eastmond, 2007). This dynamic is interesting as;

“Past experience is always remembered and interpreted in the light of the present as well as by the way that the future is imagined. What is remembered and told is also situational, shaped not least through the contingencies of the encounter between narrator and listener and the power relationship between them” (Eastmond, 2007: 249 my emphasis).

This resonates with a feminist geography epistemology as it highlights the importance of place, is sensitive to research power dynamics and evokes lived experiences (Dyck, 2005).

A consequence of the situational nature of narratives is that they are co-constructed; a collaboration between the teller and the listener. Eastmond (2007) acknowledges the centrality of the researcher's interpretation and representation of the story, resounding with feminists' emphasis of reflexivity which demands that the researcher acknowledge their role in the research process and the joint production of knowledge (England, 1994). Acknowledging the uniqueness of each interview encounter was also therefore to underscore my own role in this co-construction. Not only were participants' narratives influenced by how I interacted with them and what they felt I wanted to hear, my active role in the later analysis was equally important in shaping the final interpretations and conclusions offered in this thesis. Whilst I go on to explore this in some greater depth later in the chapter, I should highlight that using a research diary as an additional research method was critical in reflecting upon this co-construction and supporting a reflexive approach (Del Busso, 2007).

Narratives also speak of the wider context in which the individual is located. As Eastmond (2007: 251) observes, many migrants "are in the midst of the story they are telling, and uncertainty and liminality, rather than progression and conclusion, are the order of the day". The 'midst' from which participants speak is, of course, a unique assemblage of temporal and spatial factors which are by nature in constant flux. The narratives captured therefore are distinctive snapshots which, while transitory in nature, offer unique insights into participants' lives. Riessman et al (2002), for example, suggest that narratives can reveal the intersections between the personal, social and political, and the evolution of historical and political shifts in areas of contemporary political concern. Indeed, narratives have been successfully utilised by geographers throughout investigations of (ill)health, sexuality and disability (Valentine, 1998; Dyck, 1999; Hall, 2004), shedding light on the circulation and absorption of particular ideas.

Narratives are therefore deeply political in their application and interpretation. This had particular implications for my respondents given their contact with, and location within, asylum contexts. Not only were their narrative accounts constructed within wider experiences of the asylum system, the narrative form played a pivotal role within the asylum system itself (i.e. the criticality of asylum interviews for legitimising claims for asylum) and in the strategic constructions of subjectivities 'deserving' of protection from the UK government. Whilst in no way seeking to minimise the potential for offering insights into participants' everyday lives or their experiences of home, it remains important to acknowledge that these narratives were unique co-constructions of these particular contexts and other variables at play within the research dynamic. This means that a

different research design and methods may have resulted in different stories being told and different insights offered.

The 'narrative turn' of recent decades has influenced how research is approached, marking a shift towards cross-disciplinary inquiries of human life as sources of knowledge production (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Skeggs, 2002; Fraser, 2004). Squire et al (2008) observe key theoretical distinctions in how narrative research is conceived and implemented, notably research which is either event- or experience-centred. While spoken narratives that recount specific events fit a traditional narrative framework, the less conventional alternative welcomes stories that "range in length from segments of interviews, to many hours of life histories, and that may be about general or imagined phenomena, things that happened to the narrator or distant matters they've only heard about" (5). These have been facilitated through a range of media, from visual material such as photographs or pieces of art through to letters, diaries and everyday performances. Whilst some proponents disapprove of the break from traditional approaches (Craib, 2004), others welcome opportunities to explore alternative narratives through more holistic means. A key commonality between event- and experience-centred approaches to narrative research however is the acknowledgement that meaning is achieved through the telling; though the latter concedes the role of time and space in eliciting potentially different and conflicting representations. In light of this it must be acknowledged that the findings of this research offers one of potentially infinite representations of life beyond detention and is the product therefore of the particular co-constructions of specific research and broader geographical contexts.

An interesting theoretical debate within the narrative field, and of particular pertinence to considerations of mental health and wellbeing, is the psychoanalytic use and interpretation of narratives as (un)conscious emotions and feelings. Psychoanalytical perspectives are to varying degrees concerned with "aspects of experience or subjectivity such as anxiety, or desire, that fall outside narrative" (Squire et al, 2008: 10, c.f. Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Burman, 2003; Sclater, 2003). As well as questioning the unproblematised starting part of the 'unconscious' on which psychoanalytic research is based (Wetherell, 2005), critics highlight the difficulties of interpreting and measuring the 'paralanguage' gleaned through the performativity of narrative research; from parlance, body language and facial expressions to the emotional and embodied dimensions at play. One key way of accessing and making use of these intangible dimensions is adopting a reflective approach which seeks to comprehend not only the paralanguage of participants but how this is co-created by and between participants and researcher. However as Bondi (2014: 4) warns, "the

centrality of the unconscious means that what any of us might say about ourselves is always a cover story that dissembles, perhaps seeking to conceal other, potentially more significant, truths". While these observations speak to the deep complexity and richness of narrative encounters, it nevertheless underscores a key challenge of using interviews to gain insight into emotion. This brings with it a danger that interviewees might wish to tell you what they think you and others want to hear, potentially countering the aims of the research.

While undoubtedly problematic, Eastmond's (2007) narrative research with forced migrants also highlights how narratives can help conceptualise change, forge a path through uncertainty and envisage the future in new ways. She draws parallels between constructing a coherent narrative and 'feeling at home' and a sense of belonging. This suggests that reflecting on and articulating personal narratives may be instrumental in building accounts of home. Andrews et al (2008: 15), citing research by Hydén's (2008) with women who have experienced domestic violence, consider power within narrative storytelling. They reflect upon the use of stories in "problematizing the very concept of the sensitive topic itself and showing how it is relationally and culturally defined, as well as embedded in power/knowledge relations", giving "informants the possibility to develop their points of view uninterrupted and the researcher the opportunity to analyse their stories as emerging in the interviews, in its entirety".

In light of these considerations, the narrative approach I chose to adopt was experience-centred and sought a critical analysis of my own positionality. This meant seeking an active dialogue about the role I played in the construction of my participants' narratives both during the research encounter itself and the analysis that occurred beyond. Whilst the limitations/complexities detailed above promised no easy ride, I was drawn to the promise of facilitating my participants' personal expression and providing an access to their emotional and embodied geographies which were of interest to me. I also remained mindful that I, as a researcher, was by no means a passive, objective listener and I was motivated to examine my role in this complex process. While narrative accounts allow for shifting temporal connections, my respondents' accounts highlighted potential to forge connections between places and how the evocation of historical experiences of place might speak to the experiences of new places (Casey, 2001). An example was the interfacing spatial legacy of detention with home beyond release. Uncovering this co-contingent and recursive relationship was facilitated through narrative interviews which facilitate access to "motivation, emotion, imagination, subjectivity and action" (Laslett, 1999: 392).

As I embarked upon the fieldwork it soon became apparent that implementing my original research design was unrealistic and I was going to need to make some key changes. In the next section I would like to unpack my own narrative of early recruitment process, particularly negotiations with gatekeepers, and the consequences of these.

### 3.3 Recruitment challenges

From the outset, access and recruitment were at the forefront of planning because, as a minority group, I anticipated that ex-detained migrant women of various immigration statuses would be hard to access (Neufeld et al., 2001; Browne, 2005; Ruppenthal et al., 2005). Researching so-called 'hard-to-reach' populations raises ethical and methodological issues not least because access often relies upon non-random methods of data collection such as snowball sampling (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). Access to participants is an "evolving data collection process that entails having to constantly negotiate access to, within, and through desired research settings" (Maginn, 2007: 426). This resonates with feminist perceptions of research as a strategy requiring persistent (re)negotiations of power. I began by making contact with charitable organisations from which potential respondents might seek help, then utilised snowball sampling techniques after conducting some initial interviews. While I understood that building relationships with trusted organisations might facilitate easier access to potential respondents, I also wanted to understand the support networks that some women accessed and challenge my own preconceptions before starting fieldwork. Initially, I planned to gain access all respondents through one charity and conduct fieldwork in London. Not only do nearly half of the UK's migrants live in London, it also remains the country's prime destination for new migrants and home to some of the longest-settled migrant populations (Migration Observatory, 2011). Being London-based was also convenient as I lived and worked in the city and was familiar with it. The real-life fieldwork trajectory was, however, messier than anticipated and required a revision of my original research design.

At the beginning of this research journey, I established contact with a London-based Women's Centre and began volunteering weekly, twelve months before I planned to start fieldwork. In reality this constituted an early phase of fieldwork during which I observed the inner workings of the Centre. Amongst other projects, the Centre ran a self-help group for women who had experienced

incarceration in UK detention centres. My initial dealings were with Leah<sup>4</sup>, a facilitator who was enthusiastic about my research and assured me access to potential participants. I began volunteering once weekly, supporting women, who were detained in Yarl's Wood, by telephone. The Centre's ethos was of self-sufficiency and service-users were sent a self-help guide which encouraged autonomy and assertiveness. The training for volunteers was deeply political with a strong anti-government sentiment, characterised by the unconditional positive regard for those seeking support. I was easily outraged by the plight of women seeking refuge and felt comfortable in my role of 'volunteer'.

Given efforts to create a 'safe space' for vulnerable women I could understand the facilitators' unwillingness to welcome men to the Centre but I was less comfortable with the broader reluctance to engage men in consultations on issues from asylum to sexual assault. At one memorable AGM I was chastised for suggesting that engaging men and boys was crucial to effecting longer term change through community projects. My subversion was met by a rhetoric of 'sisterhood' from which I had unwittingly excluded myself. The hostility in the room was tangible and I was reminded of my conflicting positionalities and a need for caution so as not to conspicuously expose myself.

As the start of fieldwork approached I still had not been granted access to the Tuesday self-help group. Repeated requests to begin recruiting participants were deflected and meetings postponed. My contact was filtered through Leah who acted as spokesperson for the group and who imposed an increasing number of conditions. She requested a dossier detailing the journeys of some participants that aligned with the Centre's mission statement on detention, heralding the 'resistant acts' of incarcerated women. Rather than offering individuals a voucher for their involvement, she requested a donation to the charity's general fund though it remained unclear who these demands really came from. I reinforced my need to remain as impartial as possible and explained I was unable to write a publication with set conclusions before conducting the research. While met with understanding, my continued experience was of being 'coached' and subtly coerced. One strategy for conveying that I had 'heard' Leah was to engage her in an interview.

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<sup>4</sup> All names used throughout the thesis are pseudonyms. Most participants chose their own pseudonym.

When I was eventually permitted contact with potential respondents and conducted three initial interviews these were organised by Leah at times when she was present and could oversee the process. At her insistence, interviews were conducted within the Centre's busy main meeting room behind a makeshift screen, often within her eyesight. The final straw came when, in Leah's absence, a participant insisted upon recording our interview for the Centre's records. This request had clearly come from Leah and exacerbated my now deepening feeling of inadequacy and suspicion that I was under surveillance. It also raised my concerns that the participant would be inhibited from speaking openly. Despite this, I continued with the interview because I was anxious to proceed with fieldwork and felt forced to compromise, something I retrospectively regretted. The months of persevering within a culture of mistrust had depleted my confidence and somehow I felt the intervention was justified in restoring a broader imbalance of power which I had come to embody and take responsibility for. This had resulted in my personal disenfranchisement, undermining my ability to make reasonable requests which ensured participants' confidentiality. It is revealing that my interactions with the Centre left me with feelings that I identified in many ex-detained women I interviewed; feels of powerlessness, frustration and dependency. Over the next month or two my relationship with the Centre deteriorated, coming to a catastrophic end when I attended a conference on the Global Women's Strike hosted by the Centre. During a discussion, my husband, one of only a handful of men in the room, who had attended with me expressed some views in favour of NGO interventions in the 'Global South' which ran contrary to the general sentiment of the conference. This received a violent reaction which saw us both, to all intents and purposes, thrown out of the building amidst jeers and emotive verbal assaults. As my involvement with the Centre had become untenable, I made contact with Leah by email to make this clear.

These early experiences of fieldwork raised key methodological and ethical concerns not least negotiating with gatekeepers. The research process is undoubtedly political which demands reflexivity and examinations of power dynamics but the dynamic between researcher and 'gatekeeper' has received only cursory acknowledgement in geographic literature. Gatekeepers are defined as those who "provide – directly or indirectly – access to key resources needed to do research, be those resources logistical, human, institutional, or informational" (Campbell et al., 2006: 98). While gatekeepers have an important role in avoiding the exploitation of vulnerable groups and facilitating their ethical interests, my experience reveals additional dilemmas and equally imbalanced dynamics which may inhibit the application of key ethical standards. Mandel's (2003) experience of gatekeepers during her research in Benin observes that, like me, her reading of feminist research methodologies had led her to consider her positionality with regards to her

participants and how this dynamic might influence knowledge production. She had been unprepared for the micropolitics of gatekeepers, exacerbated by her self-professed western, feminist biases. This remains an apparent illustration of Kobayashi's (2003) warning that reflexivity has little purpose unless applied more broadly, with researchers needing to examine what, how and where they are conducting research (Hopkins, 2007: 287).

Campbell et al (2006) note that geographical literature portrays gatekeepers dualistically and as static (Mullings, 1999; Valentine, 2001). While portrayed as obstacles to mediate or surpass they also remain expeditors, individuals that facilitate research by acting as interpreters or intermediaries. Rarely are gatekeepers acknowledged beyond the parameters of access and when initiating research. Moreover, it is often assumed that gatekeepers are individuals. While my communication was predominantly with one individual, she appeared to speak for a collective, and largely unidentifiable, 'we' with whom I was prohibited from communicating. Depictions of gatekeeper-researcher relationships also suggest a unidirectional dynamic while in reality this may be more complex and negotiable, fluctuating over time. Although a challenging start to fieldwork, my experience of the other charities was positive and I was able to reconcile my own moral disquiet by re-establishing a solid ethical framework on which the rest of fieldwork was based.

### 3.4 Changes to research design and their consequences

A consequence of the early challenges outlined in the previous section was the need to make some key changes to the original research design. In this section I outline what these changes were and reflect on the consequences for the scope of the research.

#### *3.4.1 Additional recruitment*

In light of the early fieldwork challenges encountered, I sought to recruit additional participants through new charities. Contact was established both by utilising personal connections and cold-calling. The initial interviews had revealed that dispersal was a key concern even for those who remained in London as in all cases they had become embroiled in resisting relocation. I soon established contact with four other charities in London, Dover, Manchester, Doncaster and Nottingham which gave me access to a wider range of participants. Visiting other UK cities became important for gaining a broader picture of life beyond detention and expanded the geographical scope of the research. A key turning point was attending and briefly presenting at a conference about ex-detainees.

Whilst I had some expectation that recruitment would be challenging, it was slower than anticipated. In light of these difficulties, I chose to adapt my original research design. I had hoped from the outset to speak with approximately 25 women but as time passed it became clear this was unrealistic. Aside from the initial challenges encountered, recruitment demanded flexibility and compromise. As well as reducing the final number of participants, it induced some personal anxiety about the consequence of these methodological changes and the potential implications for the study's contribution and validity. These anxieties subsided however as fieldwork progressed and the interviews proved longer in duration and far richer in content than I was expecting. I also decided at this point to interview charity workers. I had already interviewed Leah and found that this had provided valuable contextual insights into the lives of women beyond detention. In addition to what I have termed the 'core group', these interviews constituted an additional group of five charity workers.

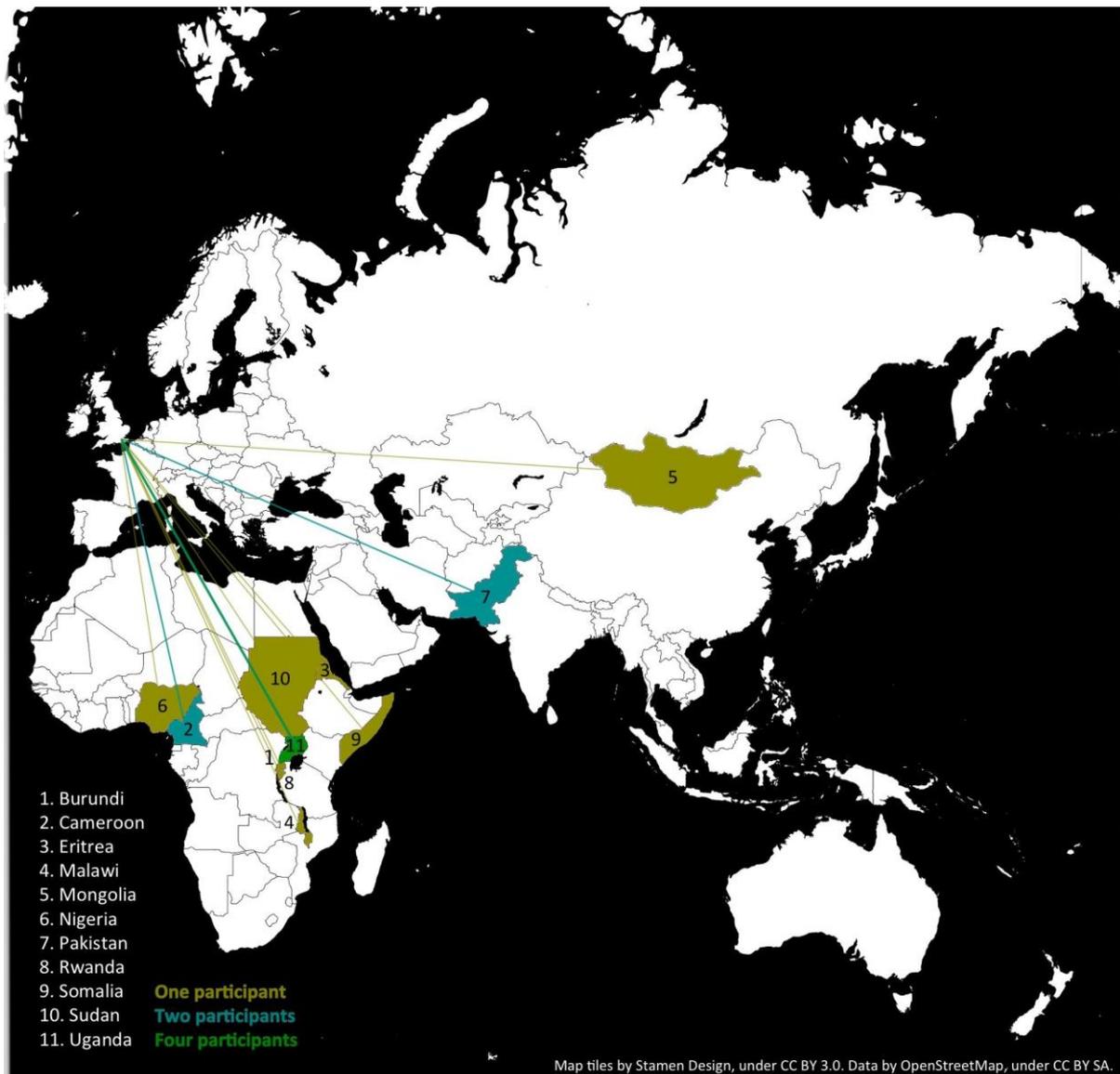
After the initial three interviews conducted at the London Women's Centre, the rest of the core group of ex-detained women was contacted through these four new charities. After initial introductions by charity workers, over half the core group were approached through snowballing. While not without limitations<sup>5</sup>, snowballing is effective in accessing hidden populations for research on sensitive topics and where trust remains problematic (Browne, 2005). Recruiting respondents was a challenging and at times frustrating process as respondents often moved, could be elusive and frequently changed mobile phone number<sup>6</sup>. Some women were wary of my intentions. In the main, concerns were allayed by remaining open and transparent but a minority declined to participate in an interview after initial contact was made. The stage of asylum was important but varied; some who had secured refugee status felt better equipped to speak retrospectively of their journey, whilst others wished to 'close that chapter' of their lives. Snowballing also helped put women at ease and having some knowledge of respondents' wider social support network created common ground.

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<sup>5</sup> I discuss these limitations in Chapter Nine.

<sup>6</sup> Some women had up to three SIM cards which they used interchangeably, often as a tactic to avoid detection.

Figure 3.1: Map showing participants' countries of origin



The initial research design was based upon a deliberately broad set of inclusion criteria so as to increase my chances of finding participants. I sought to include women of any immigration status over the age of 18 years who had been detained in a UK Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) for any length of time and at any stage within the past ten years. I did not include any other demographic criteria as I was interested in women's experiences more generally - nor could I be too exclusive given the challenges of access. The core group consisted therefore of 16 women aged between 19 and 60 years, varied in educational level and marital status. The majority (13) originated from African countries, Uganda in particular (4) which was likely a product of snowball sampling [See Figure 3.1 for map of participants' countries of origin].

While I was prepared to exclude anyone detained more than ten years ago, all women had been detained within the past decade which supported a contemporary view of detention. In line with Home Office data (2013), all but one respondent had been detained for over a month and two had been detained twice [See Table 3.1 for a summary]. While I sought participants detained for different durations and who had been resident in the UK for varying lengths of time after release, I was not in a position to make these choices. Participants were all 'forced migrants' with the exception of one 'Foreign National Offender' (FNO)<sup>7</sup> (I outline the terminology at the end of this chapter). All had been detained in Yarl's Wood IRC, the main centre for holding women (UKBA, 2011) but some had also been incarcerated in other settings such as prisons, police cells and houses [See Figure 3.2 for a map showing the location of Yarl's Wood].

Scholarship on mental health geographies has evolved over recent decades, unpacking the spatial histories of and responses to madness and mental illness in a variety of settings and contexts (Philo, 1997; Davidson, 2000; Wolch and Philo, 2000; Philo et al., 2003; 2004). Although some investigations have problematised the framing of individuals and groups within positivist discourses of mental illness, much of this work has interrogated the experiences of those with formal diagnosis. From the outset I wished to understand how the legacy of detention might be traced through mental health and wellbeing and how home might be implicated in participants' personally management of it. However, I was keen to avoid imposing western, reductionist labels of mental illness that may eschew nuanced effects of detention. As such I avoided any inclusion or exclusion criteria based on formal mental health diagnoses which might have been culturally inappropriate.

### *3.4.2 Cultural sensitivity*

Given the practical challenges of recruiting women who had been detained, I was unable to 'cherry-pick' on the basis of cultural and ethnic background. This resulted in a culturally diverse sample, which had inevitable consequences for making culturally-sensitive interpretations. Anthropologists, Lock and Nguyen (2010), have cautioned against the unproblematic use of 'culture', stressing its unstable, variable distribution across apparently homogenised places and people. They, amongst other critics, underscore the politicised nature of culture and its misapplication by a range of actors,

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<sup>7</sup> The term 'Foreign National Offender' is recognised as problematic and stigmatising not unlike the other legal identities i.e. 'asylum-seeker', and is used to establish legal status and its intersection with citizenship and entitlements.

which reinforces ethnic stereotyping and has contributed to the perpetuation of inequities, injustices and abjection of certain groups (8). This is not to suggest that culture is irrelevant, only that it remains a thorny issue.

This said, I acknowledge that generalising across so many disparate cultures might have been to gloss over the cultural specificity of the women's stories. However, from the outset it was never my intention to study differences between women based on their country of origin (or other variables such as sexuality, (dis)ability, religion, age etc.) or even the impact of country of origin on experiences of detention. I was concerned above all with the shared experience of being socially, politically and geographically positioned through the UK detention system and what this meant for perceptions of 'home'. Furthermore, it would have felt unethical to exclude women who wanted to participate in the research on the basis of their cultural background. Nevertheless, this highlights a potential avenue for further research; work which interrogates more culturally nuanced understandings of the legacies of detention.

#### *3.4.3 Changes to research methods*

In addition to adopting a new approach to recruitment as outlined in the previous section, further modification of the original research design was required with regards to the methods. Because the original range of methods (multiple in-depth interviews, participant observation within the 'home' that participants resided in, photo-elicitation methods and/or participatory video methods) all relied upon prolonged contact and multiple meetings with participants, it became clear that this was unrealistically demanding of participants. Finding women who were willing to speak with me privately was tricky enough without the added complexity of transgressing the private spaces of other residents to whom I was an unknown entity. Despite my wish to meet with individuals more than once, I also had to revise these ambitions. Women were reluctant to commit to on-going contact with me for three key reasons. Firstly, there were some participants who, because of their uncertain immigration statuses, already used strategies to remain undetected and were keen to avoid repeated contact with a researcher. They frequently changed mobile phone numbers, or used several interchangeably, which also made establishing contact challenging. Secondly, participants frequently and unexpectedly moved accommodation and were often unsure where in the UK they were going to be from week to week. For those living in NASS accommodation they could, at the behest of the UKBA, be moved across significant geographical distances between accommodations with little or no notice. Equally, those living temporarily with friends, family or acquaintances (often those were undocumented) had to be prepared to move when circumstances changed or to be

closer to charitable resources. A third factor disrupting the ability to maintain prolonged contact with participants was the threat of detention and removal. On one occasion I went to meet a woman outside a reporting centre in Croydon who had agreed by phone to take part in an interview, but she never emerged. I later discovered that she had been detained for a third time and was facing deportation which meant we were unable to ever meet. The precarious and unpredictability nature of participants' often transitory, everyday lives therefore had a key bearing on being able to meet with participants more than once, which required a revision to the original research design.

While other methods might have allowed additional, longitudinal insights, the pressures of recruitment described previously created a methodological dependency upon one-off, in-depth interviews in singular research settings. A key consequence of this was to place greater emphasis on participants' spoken narratives, and less on my own observations of their homes or the insights that video or photographs might have afforded. Given my interest in the 'everyday', questions may be raised about the potential to gain sufficient insights through one-off encounters with participants. Indeed, proponents acknowledge the limitations of one-off research methods which may only capture momentary interactions in a specific time and place (Morrison, 2012). While single interviews may have limitations in reaching the routinised nature associated with the 'everyday', in this research their in-depth quality, observations of the home in some cases, and the difficulties of following up first interviews, reflected and gave insight into participants' transitory lives and the extent of their caution about social interaction with people outside of their immediate communities. Furthermore, I concur with Schultze and Avital (2011: 5) who understand narratives sourced from one-off research interviews as "occasions for constructing situated and morally adequate accounts of events and the self" which "cannot be dismissed as one-off fabrications constructed to satisfy the interviewer; instead, they are variations on the socially constructed accounts that people give every day as they make sense of their world". Moreover, my research diary proved a valuable research method in its own right which provided key insights and reflections on the research encounter which became important data (Del Busso, 2007).

While not included in the original research design, I also decided later on in the fieldwork process to interview a small number of representatives from the five charities with which I had established contact. This decision was born in part from the early challenges of recruiting ex-detained women. Whilst these interviews provided valuable contextual information i.e. about the asylum system and perceptions of migrants' needs, I made the decision during the writing up phase to prioritise the voices of the ex-detained women. Because I was restricted by the thesis word count, I felt I needed

to make a choice of whose voices to amplify. Rightly or wrongly, this decision came to represent the walking of an important ethical and moral line. Guided by the feminist approach I had chosen, I saw an opportunity to redress a certain imbalance of power in UK society which typically silences the voices of ex-detained women and relegates them to a subordinate position. Retrospectively I wonder if this decision was also a product of the challenges I experienced at the start of fieldwork; a reaction to the resistance I experienced from the first Women's Centre. Indeed, my disapproval for what I felt was their coercive and dictatorial approach might have led me to overcompensate and authenticate the voices of these women over and above the charity workers. As stressed throughout this chapter, narratives are a co-construction and a product of the context in which both the teller and the listener are located. In regards to the latter, this leads me to question my own positioning as the listener of the narratives, how I chose to understand them, and which to prioritise. Could, for example, my awareness of the circulation of dominant ideas within UK society that vilify asylum-seekers have led me to eschew what felt an overly critical tone, taking instead the narratives 'as they were' to avoid a prejudicial stance?

While acknowledging these points, my intention from the outset was always to prioritise the ex-detained women's narratives and whilst I recruited fewer participants than I had anticipated, these interviews were richer than I had anticipated when I initially chose to augment the research design and include charity workers. I remain keen however in future publications to focus more intently upon these additional findings, as exploring in any depth the valuable insights offered by the charity workers was beyond the remit of this particular thesis.

#### *3.4.4. Research setting*

Considerations about research setting is understood by Elwood and Martin (2000) to fall into two categories; pragmatic arrangements and concerns with power. While I return to examine the latter later on in this chapter, the original research design outlined ambitions to conduct research interviews in the 'homes' of participants but ultimately, participants were given the choice of setting. While half chose their dwellings, I also met with participants in cafes, markets and charity buildings. This was because dwellings, particularly NASS accommodation, were often crowded and talking in private was difficult. The reluctance of some participants to meet in NASS accommodation also spoke of the difficulty they had to invite people and host them in private as they might have wanted. Some settings posed their own unique challenges, not least those concerning the Women's Centre where confidentiality was threatened and the the ability of respondents to speak freely undermined. A limitation of such a breadth of settings was being unable to compare and contrast

the dwellings in which all respondents lived or observe how they interacted with these spaces. While this is a limitation, I had not sought a comparative research design nor did I want to make assumptions that dwellings constituted 'home' for participants. I was, however, provided a broader range of insights about participants' interactions with 'home'. This enabled me to explore their experiences and perceptions of their communities, whilst located within these settings during fieldwork. This afforded me embodied experiences and observations of some participants' encounters with alternative spaces, which supported a focus on a critical geography of home to which multiplicity remains key. I was able to document these through my research diary, which would otherwise have been missed.

Of the 21 interviews conducted, 14 interviews were conducted in London, three in Manchester, and one interview each in Brighton, Cardiff, Doncaster and Nottingham [See Figure 3 for a map of fieldwork sites]. Had the research design been implemented in its original form, the insights, for example on dispersal, would not necessarily have been gained as the more geographically diverse picture afforded. I return to examine the complexity of the research setting in the final section of this chapter.

Figure 3.2: Map showing location of Yarl's Wood IRC



### 3.5 Conducting interviews

I conducted all interviews between November 2011 and October 2012, each lasting between one and two hours. Interviews were tape recorded after consent was gained and while I generally refrained from taking notes, I wrote detailed notes in a research diary soon after interviews were completed (Del Busso, 2007). The reliance on memory, not just participants' but my own, raises well-trodden issues of concern. As Muncey (2005: 2 cited by Chang, 2007) reminds us, personal memory is a unique source of information for researchers, but is "selective and shaped, and is retold in the continuum of one's experience". Being mindful of these complexities, I tried to capture the 'essence' of research encounters soon after the event through detailed diary entries and creating interview summaries. This helped overcome the fragmentation of interviews after analysis and became discrete sources of data. It is likely however that my recollections would have emphasised those which spoke to the emerging key themes I personally found most interesting.

All but one interview was conducted in English<sup>8</sup>; in one exception I was assisted by Theresa, an American volunteer support worker who spoke Urdu and who had known the interviewee, Rupinder, for some time<sup>9</sup>. Using interpreters in research raises potential issues, not least confidentiality. Edwards (1998) argues researchers should work with interpreters not through them. I worked collaboratively with Theresa and made time for preparation and debriefing, welcoming her insights as someone who knew the couple well. Food and eating are useful lenses through which to examine relationships between identity, place and power relations for migrant women and their spatialities, particularly within the home (Longhurst et al., 2008: 210). My encounter with Rupinder was defined by her generous provision of traditional food which afforded insights into her homebuilding activities, identity and embodied geographies of home. These insights were only possible through my association with Theresa. While Theresa's Urdu was not completely fluent and translation might have lacked cultural nuance, her presence built rapport.

Seeking a 'storytelling' dynamic, I employed a flexible, conversational style of interviewing, encouraging respondents to start with when they first came to the UK. I did not over-emphasise the circumstances leading to their migration as I was aware these might be traumatic. While some participants spoke about these in detail, others did not. Commonly, respondents returned to these

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<sup>8</sup> I had been prepared to employ translation services where necessary but all respondents had sufficient English.

<sup>9</sup> Teresa had first visited Rupinder in detention and after release, maintained contact by visiting her at home every month or so.

more intimate details towards the end after a rapport was established. All respondents spoke at length about detention. The timing, duration and general structure was largely determined by participants but as interviews progressed I used a topic guide to draw out details relating to the emerging key themes (Coates, 1997; Fraser, 2004) [See Appendix 2]. I used verbal cues to encourage participants by asking ‘how did it all begin?’ or ‘then what happened?’ to facilitate an interpretation of personal experiences into stories (Hydèn, 1994: 101). Josselson (2007) highlights the researcher’s responsibility to create an appropriate interpersonal dynamic which remains empathic yet non-judgmental. She notes that “interviewers must be sufficiently in control of their own inner processes such that impossible binds are not created” and notes that variants of “that’s good” or “I think it’s great you did that” are equally judgmental as “that’s bad” (257). Allowing sufficient time was important to provide space and convey genuine intent and interest in building a relationship.

Although narratives are undoubtedly an evocative access point to lived experience, the narrative form itself was politically and emotionally loaded for participants who had been required to recount, often on numerous occasions, their experiences for official, Home Office audiences. This served as an inevitable and dominant context within which the research interviews were constructed. Not only was there the potential that the narrative form might evoke difficult memories through associations with the asylum system, there were ethical dangers of potentially reliving traumatic experiences. I remained mindful of this and avoided an interrogative style of interviewing, encouraging respondents to speak about the entirety of their migratory journeys, as opposed to the fragmented accounts demanded by more sceptical audiences (i.e. immigration officers).

An additional consequence of this dynamic was the conscious decision to respect the ‘shape’ of the women’s stories without having to ‘make them fit’. Retrospectively this reflects an unconscious effort to compensate for the historical fragmentation of their stories. Indeed, some respondents commented on the value of having an opportunity to tell their ‘whole’ story which was at odds with their experiences of the asylum system. This is not to suggest however that my (lack of) intervention resulted in narratives which represented the ‘whole truth’. Indeed, the notion of a ‘whole’ narrative or one that is the ‘real truth’ is problematic. While I represented a more sympathetic ear, and one that sought to redress some imbalance of power, I still embodied a position of authority whose agenda, motivations and research interests were clear. Despite my best efforts at impartiality, the introductions, interview schedule and questions/prompts I gave inevitably placed demands upon participants and shaped the narratives they offered; what they spoke of, censored and emphasised. Some participants might have tried to ‘give me what I wanted’ or used the opportunity to adopt

different lexicons and political dialects to construct subjectivities that contested other more deviant identities. This might also account for the particular emphasis on detention, though it is also my belief that this remained a topic on which respondents genuinely wished to explore in great depth. These reflections demonstrate that my choices and conduct, how participants perceived me and the specificity of the research setting (location, time of day etc.) created narratives which were unique co-constructions.

The narratives also highlighted some of the institutional and social demands that participants encountered in their everyday lives (Laslett, 1999). This was both through their explicit descriptions and more subtle evocations of particular discourses. Participants thus had some opportunity to (re)claim more complex subjectivities as they could situate themselves within broader temporal and spatial contexts which revealed past, present and imagined identities. Some women's narratives recounted historic positionings of affluence and social standing juxtaposed by deviant identities of 'ex-detainee' or more desirable aspirational identities such as 'British citizen'. Narratives therefore facilitated self-affirmation which contested homogenised representations and reclaimed individuality (Eastmond, 2007). This speaks to negotiations of intersectionality which Valentine (2007: 14) defines as "the intersection of identities in terms of a doing, a more fluid coming together, of contingencies and discontinuities, clashes and neutralizations, in which positions, identities, and differences are made and unmade, claimed and rejected". It was also apparent that for participants who had received unfavourable asylum outcomes, the extent of their narratives being 'disbelieved' had been translated tangibly into their incarceration in detention. In some sense then, the research interviews also offered a chance to (re)assert themselves as 'deserving' of protection from the UK government and as a demonstration of agency. As I go on to explore in the following chapter, this was revealed in particular through a rhetoric of 'not knowing' and the construction of 'victim identities' (Kea and Roberts-Holmes, 2013).

The core sample was offered a £15 shopping voucher as a 'thank you' once interviews were completed. Compensation is ethically laden, potentially perpetuating power imbalances (Grant, 2006; Singer and Bossarte, 2006). However, Grant and Sugarman (2004) also attest that if research meets ethical standards, the introduction of compensation is usually innocuous. Although compensation appears rather more knotty than these authors suggest I evaluated my intentions reflexively and decided that this acknowledgement felt appropriate. While the ethics committee approved compensation in voucher form, retrospectively cash would have been more useful to women.

Figure 3.3: Map showing fieldwork locations



### 3.6 Analysis

The literature reveals that qualitative data may be analysed and deployed in myriad of ways (Baxter and Eyles, 1997; Lacey and Luff, 2001). While clearly demonstrating systematic, rigorous, and auditable analytical processes are key to distinguishing good quality research from bad, explicit discussions of data analysis in practice is often omitted (Thorne, 2000; Attride-Stirling, 2001). This is perhaps because analysis is on-going and recursive, occurring concurrently with fieldwork (Braun and Clarke, 2006). An early stage of analysis occurred during the transcription of interviews, which with exception of three, I personally transcribed<sup>10</sup>. The exceptions were transcribed professionally<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Interviews were transcribed verbatim

to save time and because I found transcription emotionally challenging<sup>12</sup>. The professionally transcribed interviews were those with charity workers whose English was clearest and interviews less emotionally charged (Fraser, 2004). While interviews with ex-detained respondents were sometimes unclear due to accents or emotion, I was able to 'fill in the gaps' from memory. Approximately one third of respondents elected to receive transcripts by post though none were returned with comment.

Transcription facilitated significant familiarity with the interview data and enabled me to identify<sup>13</sup> broad initial themes within and across narratives. I then systematically combed through the transcripts line-by-line, generating initial codes and segmenting the data. Once complete, these codes were organised into key themes. Braun and Clarke (2006: 18) assert that themes are usually 'data-driven' or 'theory-driven' but I found these were equally influential as themes were formed by both the key concepts on which the research questions were based (i.e. home, mental health and wellbeing, detention) and those unexpected themes that arose from the narratives themselves.

While I adopted a narrative approach to conducting the research, and employed the common analytic process of looking for commonalities and differences between respondents, I did not only conform solely to traditional modes of narrative analysis. Although concerned with the construction of respondents' narratives, I was also open to gleaning other insights identified through alternative means. As such I predominantly utilised an inductive thematic analysis which Braun and Clarke (2006) applaud for its theoretical freedom and potential to provide a "rich and detailed, yet complex account of data". These authors also rightly assert that so long as the chosen framework and methods enable the researcher to access what they want to know, and they acknowledge their active role in deciding this, there is not one 'gold standard' theoretical or methodological approach for conducting qualitative research. Thematic analysis can advantageously be used in conjunction with other theoretical frameworks such as a narrative approach.

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<sup>11</sup> The transcription service was selected carefully and assessed for its reputation from colleagues and its adherence to confidentiality and data protection legislation.

<sup>12</sup> I deal with the ethical implications of this later on.

<sup>13</sup> I use 'identify' deliberately here to heed Braun and Clarke's (2006) warning of claiming that themes emerge passively from the data and in doing so acknowledge my active role in locating them.

I chose to use Nvivo software<sup>14</sup> to code and organise data into themes. In this way, Nvivo was used to facilitate an essentially manual method of analysis. I imported transcripts directly from Microsoft Word and coded them on screen, creating visible coding stripes and holding multiple transcripts open simultaneously (Welsh, 2002). The use of analytic software within qualitative research has been widely criticised, not least concerns that software could “distance the researcher from the data, encourage quantitative analysis of qualitative data, and create a homogeneity in methods across the social sciences” (Welsh, 2002: 5). My engagement with the data was in reality enhanced because the electronic coding process was quicker; cutting down on the administrative process (i.e. cutting and pasting text) and leaving me more time to work with the data itself. While other critics suggest that Nvivo’s memoing functionality may incite a grounded theory approach by encouraging an over-emphasis on drawing out theory, I used it to attach and cross-reference analytic memos to multiple texts and code demographic data. This aided an interpretative and reflexive approach to analysis (Mason, 2002). Given the allegations that the analytic process of qualitative research lacks rigour and clarity, the uptake of analytic software by qualitative researchers may silence critics through the opportunities it affords to provide clear, traceable and speedy analytic processes, whilst also minimising mistakes (Welsh, 2002: 6). The process of analysis was therefore iterative during which I reviewed and refined themes and subthemes, assisted through the creation of a thematic map. Once completed, I returned to the transcripts to ensure these were really relevant.

Conducting narrative research is inevitably filtered through the researcher’s specific worldview and cultural perspective (Eastmond, 2007: 249). Just as the telling may ascribe meaning to experience, a reflective approach can make retrospective sense of research processes, charting the evolution of experience and ideas. This was equally evident during the analysis stage. I was interested, for example, from the outset in the extent to which experiences of ‘home’ might be conceptualised as Agambenian ‘states of exception’ (Agamben, 1998; 2005). Whilst extreme representations were initially more easily identifiable during the early stages of analysis i.e. ‘absolute’ descriptions of exception as experienced through encounters with ‘home’, coming to assume an approach which was both ‘data-driven’ and ‘theory-driven’ permitted a more sensitive approach. This allowed for a more nuanced appreciation which became pivotal in conceptualising the precarious nature of the women’s stories. This was achieved by becoming equally analytical of the contexts in which the

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<sup>14</sup> NVivo is a software package to aid qualitative data analysis designed by QSR. Its full title is NUD.IST Vivo.

narratives were constructed, such as the circulation of particular ideas and discourses which made up participants' life worlds. This analysis was supported by using constant comparison to juxtapose empirical indicators and identify similarities and differences across the interviews (Chase, 2013: 860). The reflexive approach adopted throughout the research process therefore facilitated an interactive dynamic between fieldwork and reflective analysis (Anderson and Jack, 1991; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). It is to matters of reflexivity and positionality that I now turn.

### 3.7 Reflexivity and positionality

Apprehending the undercurrents of knowledge and power is essential when approaching and undertaking research, demanding a recognition that participation in research remains active, transformative and contested for all agents involved (McDowell, 1992; Lennon and Whitford, 1994). England (1994: 244) contends that reflexivity encourages greater openness and flexibility which "dismisses the observational distance of neopositivism and subverts the idea of the observer as an impersonal machine". Thinking through the research process through a reflexive lens highlighted three key themes about which I remained preoccupied; firstly, researcher-researched relations; secondly, the influence of wider context and factors such as existing discourse and cultural background; and thirdly, the research setting. I examine each of these key areas before drawing on two excerpts from my research diary as a means of illustration.

#### *3.7.1 Researcher-researched relations*

Attempts to unpack researcher-researched relations have seen feminist researchers examine their role in research scenarios, in particular their role in knowledge production and their place in relations of power (Rose, 1997: 309). While early feminists romanticised the potential of equal and non-hierarchical research relations, later proponents concur this is largely unattainable. They advise instead that we remain mindful of our own position, and our research participants', 'writing this into our research practice' (McDowell, 1992: 409). England (1994: 244) notes that contrary to misconstrued interpretations of narcissism, reflexivity is actually "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher". Others remain dubious about 'transparent reflexivity' because it requires significant objectivity and assumes the researcher is powerful (Rose, 1997). Indeed, it is through the performative nature of research that "the tensions, conflicts and unexpected occurrences which emerge in the research process [...] begin to decentre our research assumptions, and question the certainties that slip into the way we produce knowledge" (Valentine, 2002: 126). Such an approach to research recognises that all proponents occupy varying positions of power. This influences the methods chosen, how knowledge

is produced and interpreted, with the potential to evolve over time (Kobayashi, 2003; Sultana, 2007). Likewise, Dyck and McLaren (2004: 514) view research processes as “embodied performances of negotiated subjectivities, cultural scripts, and differential location within distributions of power – both on the part of researchers and those interviewed”. Because conducting research is infused with uncertainty, these authors assert that this must be ‘written into research’ (516), a potential which is opened up through reflexive practice and considerations of positionality.

Scrutinising positionality is particularly important in acknowledging the co-construction of narratives. I was aware of my positioning as a British, mixed raced, middle class, academic woman in her early 30s and the significance of this to my interactions with respondents. Some participants compared me to their daughters, identified me as ‘privileged’, or a potential source of support. Others saw me as a conduit through which their stories might be heard by the wider British public and change effected. There was some tension between my positionality as an academic with strong feminist values and an occupational therapist. Having worked in various health and social care settings, I was aware of how this experience provided a particular lens through which I was used to making clinical judgments, and made a concerted effort to avoid this.

Proponents suggest that therapist researchers may struggle to manage boundaries between therapy and research settings because both activities utilise similar skills, and research interviews can emulate therapeutic interviews/assessments (Coyle and Wright, 1996; Duncombe and Jessop, 2002). My multiple positionalities at times felt blurred and maintaining boundaries while avoiding a therapeutic role was complicated (Dickson-Swift et al., 2006). A key difference however was that unlike occupational therapy assessments, research interviews did not culminate in a care plan to pragmatically address need and mitigate risk. Josselson (2007: 538) adds that “the essence of the ethical conundrum in narrative research derives from the fact that the narrative researcher is in a dual role - in an intimate relationship with the participant (normally initiated by the researcher) and in a professionally responsible role in the scholarly community”.

Currents of power within research encounters are not however always linear, nor do they only flow unilaterally from the researcher to the researched (Browne, 2005). Some respondents welcomed an opportunity to become active agents in challenging misleading representations of refugees and asylum-seekers and raising awareness of the debilitating effects of detention which they hoped could influence policy. The research enabled them to have their voice heard, exercise their freedom to speak about poor treatment and ‘set the record straight’. While I managed expectations as best I

could about the real difference my research could make, participation itself seemed to be an important demonstration of agency that some women welcomed. Exercising control was also demonstrated by potential participants' declining to participate. Similarly the use of (non)disclosure during interviews was a mechanism by which participants expressed "their autonomous choice of narration or silence" (De Haene et al., 2010: 1669). Some chose not to speak about certain topics such as separation from children. As I go on to illustrate from excerpts from my research diary, there were also moments when I felt disempowered during research encounters which had its own consequences for the (co)construction of research interviews.

### *3.7.2 Influence of wider context and factors*

I remained mindful throughout the research process of the situational nature of participants' narratives, their co-construction and multiplicity. Indeed, the predominant theoretical or epistemological focus of a narrative approach is how narratives are constructed and how individuals use these to make sense of their lives (Thorne, 2000). These analytic processes can include detailed deconstructions of narratives to identify the types, directions and contradictions within stories and involve scanning across different domains of experience (i.e. cultural, structural or interpersonal) (Fraser, 2004). It is widely acknowledged that narrative research attends not just to what is said but how that story is constructed and for what purpose (Trahar, 2009). This speaks to feminists' concern with the contingent nature of personal and political realms as revealed through dominant discourse (Jackson, 1998). Crucially however, narratives speak to or are informed by the circulation of ideas in which the individual is located and what is deemed '(un)tellable'.

As products of the contexts from which the narratives were told, I was interested in identifying key references to popular discourses within and across participants' narratives such as 'human rights' (or '(not) being human'), 'infantilisation' and 'torture'. The narratives, and the discourses they (sub)consciously spoke to, were also instrumental in the construction of particular identities. The interviews conducted with charity workers were useful for contextualising the narratives of the ex-detained women, highlighting how representative these were of other women they supported and interrogating the political significance of these organisations. In one case for example, a participant used her narrative in part to construct her identity as a 'survivor' and a 'resilient woman'. Casting an analytic eye across other interview transcripts (and the information documented in my research diary), uncovered possible sources and explanations for this representation. The woman was a member of the London Women's Centre discussed above which had a robust politicised gender ideology and which appeared influential in helping shape this participant's particular subjectivity.

This was reinforced by my own reflections of volunteering at the Centre, the narratives of other service-users, and the interview with the charity worker/gatekeeper. Further still, the interview had been conducted in the Centre's main meeting room, within eyeshot of this dominant figure.

Szczepanikova (2010) observes the micropolitics within Czech NGOs and the construction of gendered refugee identities in order to facilitate access to social and economic rights. She notes how some NGOs create spaces where certain performances of 'refugeeness' are nurtured and particular subjectivities and identities enacted by (dis)encouraging certain behaviour and providing performative 'scripts'. Although Szczepanikova's insights are the inverse of my observations, there are some interesting parallels. While perhaps seeking to maintain a particular representation which served the charity's wider political interests and funding, the ideology proliferated through the Women's Centre demanded equally essentialised performances of resilient subjectivities and identities through the provision of dominant performative 'scripts'. The evidence across multiple sources supported the assertion that this woman's narrative was inflected in part at least by the themes of resilience and autonomy born from her association with the Centre. This underscores the criticality of wider context and factors, how certain identities were adopted/rejected and the role of the research encounter in strengthening/challenging dominant ideologies through the construction of narrative.

Another discourse surfacing from respondents' narratives was biomedical representations of wellbeing. As a possible result of attempts to 'neutralise' my personal inclination for clinical judgements, I avoided from the outset reductionist categories of mental illness, seeking instead a broader framing of 'mental health and wellbeing'. Interrogations of public health literature revealed an unhelpful conflation between 'mental health' and 'mental illness'. Proponents assert that while 'mental health' is a potentially positive resource and 'mental illness' may have devastating, long-term consequences for quality of life, the absence of mental illness does not necessarily mean high levels of positive mental health or vice versa (Rankin, 2005). Others note that 'mental health' may be either positive ('flourishing') or negative ('languishing') and can include; emotions, cognition, social functioning and coherence (Keyes, 2002; 2005, Friedli and Parsonage, 2009: 16). While this framework was ostensibly more holistic than biomedical categories, it remained inadequate for eschewing the social, political, emotional and embodied diversity of everyday life. Furthermore, Keyes (2006: 605) notes that this conceptualisation of mental health is still largely reliant on the identification of "an emergent condition based on the concept of a syndrome" which is steeped in reductionist interpretations.

Seeking an alternative framework, I turned to contemporary human geographical investigations of mental health centred on wellbeing. This literature has recognised wellbeing as having implicitly emotional, mental and physical dimensions (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007; Pain and Hopkins, 2009; Chase, 2013) which allowed for more holistic conceptualisations of wellbeing. This broader understanding of wellbeing accommodated the diverse biological, psychological, social, cultural and economic and political dimensions of participants' experiences and their inherently gendered nature (Dyck, 2003). Reengaging with these narratives at interlocking emotional and embodied scales (i.e. through a refocus on the psycho-corporeal) and how these were linked to place (in particular a critical understanding of home), afforded a better grasp of lived experience that avoided reinscribing limiting subjectivities.

Despite cautious avoidance of reductionist categories and careful attempts to establish a more inclusive framework of 'wellbeing', an interesting discovery was the reliance of some participants upon biomedical representations and a positivistic lexicon of symptomology to describe their experiences. I had from the outset, remained open to varied cultural interpretations by allowing for emotional and embodied accounts and sought to avoid fixed binaries of illness vs. wellness. I had not, however, initially anticipated that reductionist categories might in fact be reclaimed by some participants. Just as dominant discourses surrounding 'torture' and 'trauma' were woven through women's narratives, i.e. augmenting constructions of particular 'deserving' subjectivities, biomedical framings were instrumental in how some participants for example conveyed the full impact of incarceration on their wellbeing. It was only during later analysis that the appropriation of this discourse was identified and my assumptions exposed about what was or was not an 'adequate' framing of wellbeing. This discussion reiterates the advantages afforded by a narrative approach to create 'space' for individuals to 'speak' in their entirety and the additional insights elicited by a reflexive approach, which equally demanded an examination of my own positionality.

### *3.7.3 Research setting*

Feminist geographers remain concerned with how place is implicated in the constitution and negotiation of social categories and subjectivities, and how "spaces and places at various geographical scales are not simply neutral backdrops to action, but are socially constructed arenas of contested power relations, constituted within global flows of people, capital and information, and constantly in process" (Dyck and McLaren, 2004: 518). There is recognition that engagements with the spatial nature of material practices occurring within specific sites may also reveal something of the emotional and embodied fabric of daily life. Methodologically then, place is of central

importance, indeed Eastmond (2007: 249), cited above, emphasises that “what is remembered and told is also situational”. Elwood and Martin (2000: 650) note that the site in which interviews are conducted represents a “microscale of sociospatial relations, manifesting the intersection of broader power dynamics - at multiple scales, such as the neighbourhood, city, region and so on - with the social relations constructed in the interview setting itself”. They observe that the microgeography of the interview is an intersection of the researcher, participant, and the broader sociocultural context in which this interaction occurs.

Elwood and Martin (2000) also contend that the interrogation of interview locations offers two key opportunities. Firstly, it can further researchers’ insights into participants’ social geographies, such as my observations of participants’ interactions within NASS accommodation or in community settings. Secondly, observations may be made of how participants are located in relation to “other actors and to his or her own multiple identities and roles, affecting information that is communicated in the interview as well as power dynamics of the interview itself” (652). Not only did the early interviews conducted at the Women’s Centre offer an opportunity to observe participants in these spaces and their interaction with others, the microgeographies of the research setting itself afforded insights into the underlying power structures. In these cases, the microgeographies were constructed by the gatekeeper’s ‘presence’ (both physically and in one case ‘in spirit’ though the presence of the additional tape recorder), the performative scripts implicit to this particular space and pervasive gendered ideology. This undoubtedly influenced how I engaged with these participants and how they engaged in the interview. While these interviews shed light upon some participants’ interactions with one Women’s Centre, other interviews conducted in different settings, such as participants’ dwellings, provided equally valuable insights which I go on to explore in some depth.

I now turn to two excerpts from my research diary which, through an examination of positionality and reflexivity, shed light on all three issues raised in this section; researcher-researched relations, the influence of wider context and factors, and research setting. In particular, I reflect on how emotion remained central to these negotiations. The first excerpt describes an interview conducted with Bella in her London-based NASS accommodation.

“Bella’s room located on the third floor at the back of the property was large and sparsely furnished with mismatched furniture; a wardrobe, shelves and two single beds set against opposite walls. The walls were dirty and the thin carpet discoloured and stained in places.

There were faded children's duvet covers on the beds and a torn piece of net curtain flapping at the open window through which I could hear traffic thundering past on the main road. The view beyond, as far as the eye could see, was a suburban sea of buildings [...] The interview was long, comprising several lengthy, detailed monologues about Bella's legal case and the events leading up to her being convicted of trafficking, her imprisonment and subsequent detention. While Bella's narrative was strikingly factual and unemotional in content, she exuded anger and fierce injustice as she spoke. Bella answered my questions sharply, and I got the impression these were viewed as unnecessary interruptions to her effort to preserve and get her account 'on the record'. I felt somewhat intimidated by her forceful presence and let her speak uninterrupted, ignoring the topic guide more than I'd have liked. I was struck by Bella's ability to recite endless dates which created a sense of authority, framing what became her 'narrative of innocence'. She loudly enunciated the names of specific judges or MPs that had let her down, looking pointedly towards my iPhone as if to make sure it was recording these details. Bella made clear she was not interested in anonymity as when I emphasised confidentiality in the participant information sheets she literally waved it aside. By the time Bella had reached the end of her narrative she seemed exhausted, listless and to have run out of steam. She was unwilling to return and elaborate on earlier details." Research diary, 27th March 2012

Not only does this account illustrate all three issues discussed above, it underscores the significance of emotion. Indeed, it was the emotional interplay that defined the particular power dynamic; the notable absence of emotion in what Bella said but its emotionally inflected delivery, the unspoken emotions that the dynamic evoked in me and how this shaped my interactions with Bella. My growing reluctance to interject as Bella spoke was to help construct a narrative which was freer from direction, unlike participants who were less forthcoming and required greater prompting. Conducted in the early stages of fieldwork, I still had much to learn about the logistics of the asylum process and I found myself somewhat inadequately informed on the finer details. In comparison, Bella's familiarity and fluency in an asylum discourse not only added weight and authority to her narrative, it heightened feelings of self-doubt in me, off-setting the balance of power. Indeed, at one point during the interview (not addressed in this particular diary extract), my question about housing choices was met with a forcefully indignant retort. This rather naïve question had revealed (it seemed to me) my lack of understanding while perhaps simultaneously reinforcing Bella's sense of powerlessness over her situation. There were stark juxtapositions between Bella's constructed identity as a formerly wealthy, professional homeowner and PhD student (whose studies had been

cut short on account of her immigration problems), and her diminished status as a Foreign National Offender. This diminished status was starkly emphasised by her location within the intimate research setting; the bleak NASS accommodation where she was held on electronic tag and the wider community from which she was largely excluded. Moreover, Bella's identity as participant as part of my PhD research was perhaps to also highlight what she had been unable to complete, perhaps evoking feelings of anger, inadequacy and loss. My emotions, so closely aligned with Bella's, are revealing of the deeply relational nature of research encounters and the fluctuation of power. In this way the narrative, like all others, was shaped by the unique interaction between Bella and I, located and produced by the specificity of the research setting, whilst equally speaking to wider discourses around asylum and Bella's strategic use of it.

Emotions and the body are recognised as co-contingent, indeed Davidson and Milligan (2004: 523) argue that the "inherently emotional nature of embodiment has, thus, led many to the conclusion that we need to explore how we feel - as well as think - through 'the body'. While explicit embodied accounts may help construct evocative narratives which shed light upon the dynamic experiences of respondents, the use of the body can also become significant for researcher-researched relations by revealing pervasive issues of difference and power. In this next excerpt I examine how the body was an additional site on which another interview encounter played out and, through its intersection with the research setting, constructed an evocative narrative which shaped the power relations between me and the participant, Janet.

"While the bedroom itself was reasonably spacious, Janet's share was small perhaps 3 x 2 metres. A single bed was pushed into one corner, barricaded in on all sides by a makeshift wall constructed by a desk, cabinet and wardrobe. In the absence of anywhere else to sit that was private Janet invited me to join her so we squeezed in to sit on the unmade bed, the duvet piled up on one end. Once sat next to Janet who was a large woman, I found myself in a very enclosed space. I leaned back on her duvet, my knees up in a kind of foetal position with only a small amount of bed space between us. As Janet was talking I felt drawn into her embodied, emotional experience and the cocoon-like nature of this small space in which she wept for her children and lay awake during long nights of insomnia. Janet reinforced her accounts of being prostituted by her captors, and the numerous rapes and beatings she bore when she tried to escape by showing me the many scars she had sustained; raised, angry hypertrophic scarring on her arms and belly. She pulled out a plate from her mouth which replaced some but not all of her lost teeth to illustrate how her smile

remained a permanent reminder of the physical violence she had endured. Janet's act of offering her body as 'evidence' to me felt reminiscent of what I imagine she had been required to do time and again, the private space of her body becoming public, objectified and open to scrutiny. Yet there was something eager in the action, a longing to set the record straight. In the moment it spoke of Janet's wish to convince me of her truth; seeing me perhaps as yet another scrutinising figure seeking to hear (judge) her story." Research diary, 8th May 2012

Longhurst et al (2008: 208) note that whilst researchers are adept at declaring their positioning in terms of race, age and gender, other "aspects of body-space relations such as smells, tastes, gestures, reactions, clothing, glances and touches often slip away unnoticed and/or undocumented". Research methods taken up by geographers have diversified greatly but these authors note that the body as a research tool has been largely overlooked. Janet's narrative was a product of what she said, how she used her body, my embodied experience and the intimacy of the research setting. Much of the insights into Janet's lived experience then, were non-verbal and conveyed experientially. In seeking a way to locate the body in the research process, Dewsbury and Naylor (2002) recommend a concurrent focus on emotion. My embodied experience of the interaction with Janet evoked powerful emotions which deepened my insights into Janet's experience of helplessness, fear and to a lesser degree, hope.

Intimacy is implicated in wellbeing as not only does the capacity to share personal stories and feelings indicate how 'emotionally healthy' someone is and 'in touch' with their internal world, creating a union with another is integral to wellbeing (Jamieson, 1998). The physical proximity engendered by the research setting which was Janet's bed, engendered an intimacy and rapport which had an impact on our relationship. On the one hand Janet's actions suggested a certain readjustment of power whereby she chose to draw me into her intimate space, demonstrating an eagerness to convey the fullness of her experience of home. On the other, my presence might have been a violation of her private space which she endured to participate in the interview. Regardless, her narrative might not have been so powerfully conveyed had we been positioned more conventionally, separated perhaps by a desk. This is not to say that interviews located in other more public settings were less intimate, only differently. Thien's (2005) reflections on the spatialities of intimacy, disrupt conventional interpretations which assume 'correct' positionings at fixed opposites. She endorses "intimacy as distance, intimacy as difference" which offers a "flexible intimacy reflecting the ambivalent and elastic spatialities of women's emotional landscapes" (201).

This suggests that intimacy is achievable in less proximal scenarios and in spite of difference and alterity. Thien's insights are useful when extending methodological considerations in particular those embroiled with positionality.

The research encounter with Janet also reveals the omnipresence of wider contexts and discourses, illustrated by Janet's strategic use of her scarred body to enhance her verbal narrative with an embodied truth. Intentionally or not, Janet's embodied evidence was used to substantiate her 'truth' which perhaps she felt compelled to display given this pervasive metanarrative of truth and credibility and 'culture of disbelief' implicit to the judicial and asylum system to which she had been subjected (Finch, 2005). Many participants augmented their narratives with 'proof', from written documentation, text messages and scarring which implied that I needed 'convincing' of their truths and placed me in a position of authority. The research setting therefore became an opportunity to (re)negotiate 'narratives of innocence' and construct identities which were deserving of protection. This dynamic suggests a certain subtext for the research encounter which implies an inherently imbalanced power dynamic. Fassin and D'Halluin (2005) observe that trauma and health problems have become exchangeable for refuge and the wounded body the 'terrain of truth'. This speaks of the researcher-subject relationship where the researcher bears witness to the narratives occurring and the benefits this might elicit. This discussion, and that throughout this chapter, raises key ethical consideration and it is to this that I now turn in this final section of this chapter.

### 3.8 Ethical deliberations of emotionally charged research

Ensuring ethical rigour was central to every stage of this research. Although any research is fraught with ethical dilemmas, garnering narratives may be particularly sensitive as they can elicit unpredictable emotional content. Josselson (2007) contends that acknowledging the significance of the research process itself with participants is helpful in this regard. I ended all interviews by 'checking in' with respondents about their experience and encouraging questions. My clinical experience equipped me with transferable skills including being attuned to watching, listening and asking questions about respondents' daily lives and experiences, and the meaning they attached to these (Watts, 2008). Because maintaining boundaries can be problematic and may place researchers unwittingly in unethical situations with vulnerable participants, my training was also beneficial, if only prompting me to stop and reassert the purpose of the research (Hart and Crawford-Wright, 1999). In one instance, I also supported a participant to renew their contact with the charity to which we were mutually acquainted. Having lost touch with the organisation, she wanted to renew her contact in order to access their services. I also used my research diary for reflexive debriefing.

Conducting research with vulnerable people remains a thorny issue, not least that which seeks intimate and potentially distressing narratives. While potential exists to redistribute “power and control within their reciprocal research relationships” by moving from the “distant expert–respondent relationship toward the focus on participants’ autonomy of expressing personal experience” (De Haene et al., 2010: 1668), there is also the risk of reactivating traumatic experiences. This represents an uneasy vacillation between reinforcing powerlessness and mobilizing autonomy (De Haene et al., 2010). In addition to their centrality within asylum discourse, narratives can feature in pre-migration oppression, for example the use of forcible disclosure or coercive silence by repressive regimes as weapons of human rights violations (Mollica, 2001). Furthermore, post-traumatic stress can induce an inability to speak of traumatic events. While adopting a narrative format with forced migrants who may be contaminated by historic interrogations which seek an ‘absolute truth’ is clearly problematic, this might be offset if ‘received’ appropriately. My research was not focused on trauma and I was careful not to seek out explicitly traumatic accounts which might unearth old trauma and damage participants’ coping skills. There were, however, recursive references to torture across many interviews, indicating the acute (yet largely silent) presence of these discourses and the strategic use of it to construct narratives of being ‘deserving’ (I explore participants’ use of narrative to construct ‘deserving’ subjectivities in the next chapter). All respondents who discursively identified experiences of torture had received or continued to receive specialist support.

Ansell and Van Blerk (2005) observe the reluctance of some researchers to acknowledge the emotional output evoked by challenging research topics. Despite progress in feminist methodologies, they argue this stems from ingrained ‘masculine’ representations of research encounters and a fear of intervening in the lives of vulnerable people to detriment effect. The expression of emotion is not necessarily harmful, they argue, or that a blinkered focus on positive emotion is any better. Respondents often became emotional during fieldwork but all chose to keep going. This is captured in the following exchange with Ella who at one stage became tearful;

Menah: “Are you okay to keep talking? Do you want to stop and take a break?”

Ella: “Its okay, no, no, no, I can continue, I’ve been through this a lot of times.”

Menah: “If it gets too hard just say and we can stop for a while.”

Ella: “No, I’m strong! Don’t worry!”

Menah: “It must be hard to relive all of these memories?”

Ella: "It is but I like talking about it, it releases..."

Parr (1998b: 348) reminds us that "the methodological lesson hence is not to always avoid emotion, to diagnose it and remove it from the exchange, but to avoid the placing of participants in inferior and powerless positions". Although emotional, Ella chose to continue the interview and garnered strength from her expressed emotions. It became clear that expressing emotions was one way in which the narrative was constructed, i.e. emphasising particularly challenging events or experiences, and my role as a researcher was to witness this. I had no need at any stage to discontinue an interview because a respondent had become overly distressed and for whom I had undue concern (Robson, 2001).

Written and verbal consent was sought before interviews began but respondents were also reminded of their freedom to avoid certain topics and withdraw at any point (De Haene et al., 2010) [See Appendix 3]. Studying ex-detained women of varying immigration statuses posed several ethical issues (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). Early challenges arose when seeking permission from the university ethics committee. My initial application was conditionally approved, subject to changes to the participant information sheet. These were to make clear that the disclosure of criminal activity not already known by the Courts was discouraged as this might risk incrimination [See Appendix 4]. While unlikely, this incrimination could come about if research data was confiscated by the UKBA or police. While seemingly straightforward in accounts of criminal activity such as murder, the consequences were less clear in cases of illegal immigration and activities such as working illegally. Two participants were refused asylum-seekers and therefore occupied a grey area of legality and remained particularly vulnerable. Düvell et al (2010: 227) observe that irregular migration is elusive and "takes place in violation of the law and at the margins of society" which raises key ethical issues "including the sensitivity and vulnerability of the research subjects". While some argue irregular migration should not be researched for this reason, others argue – and I concur – that shying away from controversial topics is to evade responsibility and perpetuate discrimination (Sieber and Stanley, 1988). Moral stance aside, I was concerned about disadvantaging these individuals for whom confidentiality remained so crucial (Migrants Rights Network, 2009). I therefore discouraged the unnecessary disclosure of incriminating information and avoided documenting the 'how' of their migration, focusing instead on the 'why' and the 'where' (Black, 2003: 42). Research with vulnerable individuals must ultimately ensure the potential benefits of their inclusion outweigh the potential risks. It was my belief that in this case, and in line with the precautions taken, the benefits were greater and ethically compromising positions were avoided.

Acknowledging the relational and emotional implications of doing research in different contexts (Davies and Dwyer, 2007) demands an equal address of the researcher's emotions and the ethical implications this evokes (Bondi, 2005a; Ansell and Van Blerk, 2005; Davidson et al., 2007). Woodby et al (2011: 831) observe the emotional challenges of conducting sensitive-topic research and that "we often fail to openly discuss the impact of this work or to describe the emotional labor strategies we use to sustain our emotional equilibrium". Despite efforts to manage expectations, I felt a sense of great responsibility to meaningfully handle respondents' narratives. Witnessing often deeply moving and upsetting stories created an emotional residue of powerlessness, guilt and despair at what felt my ineffectiveness at changing the hopeless, lonely situations of some respondents. These feelings played out throughout the research process from a need to transcribe interviews in minute detail, to analysing the data 'thoroughly' so as to avoid misrepresenting them or missing crucial detail. Woodby et al (2011) identify the trials of coding interview data and the cumulative stress of repeated exposure to challenging data. These observations concur with my own experiences of singlehandedly transcribing, coding and analysing data, during which I 'relived' the interviews, re-evoking emotions sometimes more intensely in private where composure was less important. While I acknowledge that any qualitative analysis is partial, subjective and unrepresentative, the self-inflicted pressure at times left me feeling paralysed (Widdowfield, 2000). Bondi (2005b) argues for greater appreciation of researcher's emotions in research practices. In her reflections on her own doctoral research, she discusses the debilitating nature of negative emotions of guilt, inadequacy and shame and notes the dangers of repressing these. Unlike Bondi however, I remained in touch with my emotions and was able to process these during supervision and through reflexive writing. Acknowledging these emotions was not to rationalise or 'work them out' of research, only to ensure they did not interfere unacceptably.

Not only was the body the site on which I bore witness to some participants' narratives, it also at times had a profound and long-lasting impact on my embodied experience. Dyck and McLaren (2004: 519) observe that the body-as-scale "also allows us to struggle with our own voices as researchers, embodying the social relations of research, and with our own subjectivities and spatialities deeply implicated in how knowledge is constructed". Following some research encounters, I felt I was left 'holding' the narratives long after they had finished, without feeling able to affect change. I noticed, for example, that after interviews during which women spoke of sexual violence and torture, I retained some feelings of shame and revulsion which manifested in a personal avoidance of physical intimacy. The deeply embodied nature of these accounts left me with

a need to process these experiences at this level, and examine how my own body sometimes held remnants of the women's narratives. I decided early on in the fieldwork stage to go into therapy, choosing a somatically oriented therapy (Dance Movement Psychotherapy) which helped me to explore this somatic projection and transference, and the vicarious processing of emotion at an embodied level. Whilst helping me cope better with the cumulative, transference nature of witnessing traumatic accounts, it also supported a better understanding of the research process and my role in the co-creation of these narratives. Creating this time to process and make better personal sense of these experiences fed back into the other interviews I later conducted. It enabled me to be more emotionally present, reflective and compassionate, strengthening my personal resilience. Had I not undergone this process an alternative coping strategy might have been to become more detached, emotionally dispassionate or indeed displaying inappropriate levels of high expressed emotion.

There was something significant therefore in my own personal narrative of the fieldwork as it progressed and my role as the connector across and between narratives. Having made space to process more personal feelings around conducting the research, my confidence, knowledge and insight grew with every research encounter, facilitating greater sensitivity of questioning and more nuanced understandings. This, to some inevitable degree, shaped the outcomes of later interviews, becoming woven into the overall research narrative and creating a unique and un-replicable experience. While introspection is useful, I agree with Finlay (2002: 215) who warns against becoming unduly preoccupied by one's own emotions and overly privileging the researcher's position. Nevertheless, examining emotional responses may reveal something of the counter-transference nature of the research encounter which is useful in accessing the emotional content evoked through the process for all agents concerned (Pile, 1991)<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.9 Chapter conclusions

This chapter began by outlining the feminist epistemological stance which infused the thinking about and doing of this research (Moss, 2002). Throughout I have problematised the narrative approach on

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<sup>15</sup> I use this psychoanalytic reference cautiously in line with Parr's (1998b: 345) concern about top-down psychoanalytic framings of the 'research-alliance' and "quasi-therapeutic management of the expression of selves". Caution aside I also concur that a critical psychodynamic reflection might uncover the psychodynamics of the research situation and "reveal interesting angles on the research relationship in which emotions, feelings and desires are privileged" (ibid).

which this research was based and reflected on how this speaks to a feminist epistemology. Central to this has been a reflexive approach which demands an open dialogue about power relations and an acknowledgment of the co-constructed, situated nature of narratives. The chapter has included a pragmatic consideration of the original research design, the reality of putting this into practice and the adaptations that were necessary. While my original research design sought to include more participants and utilise a broader range of research methods, over multiple meetings and in the dwellings of participants, the challenges faced during early recruitment required a reevaluation of this design. A consequence of this was a reliance on one-off in-depth interviews in multiple settings. While an advantage was insights into a broader range of research settings supporting the investigation of a critical geography of home, I have also acknowledged that repeated contact through follow up interviews for example might have afforded different, longitudinal insight, particularly on the 'every day'. Limitations aside, I have contended that narratives are always unique, co-constructed products of the research encounter and therefore offer women's representations of their experiences of everyday life. The adoption of a reflexive approach therefore has been shown to amplify the potential to access experiences of lived experience as it unlocks the layers of meaning afforded from narratives. While I have adopted a reflexive approach throughout this chapter, I identified three key themes which are augmented through this approach and which enhance the offerings of research which takes a narrative approach; firstly, researcher-researched relations; secondly, the influence of wider context and factors such as existing discourse and cultural background; and thirdly, the research setting. This has been aided through an interrogation of extracts from my research diary. Emerging from the discussion of positionality and reflexivity, the chapter concluded with an engagement with the ethical implications of undertaking emotionally charged research.

The next chapter is the first of five empirical chapters which, in line with the methodological approach detailed here, are led by the voices of participants. The chapter interrogates, and is structured by, three key geographical sites through which participants constructed their 'narratives of precarious beginnings'; flight and arrival, the asylum process, and Yarl's Wood. Through a critical enquiry of these three sites, I unpack the key narrative strategies that participants employed as part of a broader construction of producing 'deserving' identities.

Table 3.1: Demographic summary of core sample

	Name*	Age	Country of origin	Time in the UK	Time detention	Asylum status	Family & relationship status	Current accommodation	Interview location	Educational level	Employment status	Key occupational history	Religious faith
1	Jennifer	36	Somalia	4 years	1 <sup>st</sup> : 5 months 2 <sup>nd</sup> : 6 months	Refugee	In r'ship, 3 children	Friend's home, London	Charity premises	Secondary	Ineligible to work,	Mother & housewife	Christian
2	Jana	45	Nigeria	10 years	3 months	Refugee	Widow, 3 children	Temporary hostel, London	Charity premises	Primary	Unemployed	Mother & housewife	Christian
3	Bella	52	Cameroon	17 years	9 months	Foreign National Offender	Widow, 3 children	NASS, London	Home	Masters	Ineligible to work	PhD researcher/ economist	Catholic
4	Khanara	20	Mongolia	5 years	9 months	Asylum-seeker	Married, no children	NASS, London	Café	BTEC	Ineligible to work	Dental nurse	Christian
5	Janet	43	Zimbabwe	7 years	1 year, 10 months	Asylum-seeker	Widow, 3 children	NASS, London	Home	Primary	Ineligible to work	Mother & housewife	Christian
6	Tulisa	34	Cameroon	8 years	1.5 weeks	Refused asylum-seeker	Single, no children	Friend's home, London	Charity premises	No formal education	Ineligible to work	Care worker	Christian
7	Ella	42	Uganda	11 years	5 months	Asylum-seeker	Single, no children	NASS, Stoke-on-Trent	Café	BTEC	Ineligible to work	Care worker	Christian
8	Amelia	32	Uganda	4 years	1 month	Asylum-seeker	In r'ship, no children	NASS, Doncaster	Home	Masters	Ineligible to work	Educator/ business woman	Catholic
9	Laura	60	Malawi	8 years	5 months	Refused asylum-seeker	Divorced, 4 children	Friend's home, Nottingham	Home	O' Levels	Ineligible to work	Care worker	Pentecostal Christian
10	Mya	26	Uganda	3 years	3 months	Refugee	Single	Relative's home, London	Café	NVQ	Unemployed	Retail	Christian
11	Pru	42	Burundi	17 years	1.5 months	Asylum-seeker	Widow, 4 children	Local authority housing, London	Home	No formal education	Ineligible to work	Mother & housewife	Christian
12	Haben	19	Eritrea	3 years	11 months	Asylum-seeker	Married, 1 child	NASS, London	Home	No formal education	Ineligible to work	Mother & housewife	Pentecostal Christian
13	Mary	31	Uganda	11 years	1 <sup>st</sup> : 4 months 2 <sup>nd</sup> : 10 days	Refugee	Single, no children	Local authority housing, Brighton	Home	Under-graduate	Unemployed	Nurse	Christian
14	Berdour	38	Sudan	6 years	1 week	Asylum-seeker	Single, no children	Charity housing, Manchester	Charity premises	Doctorate	Ineligible to work	Doctor	Muslim
15	Noreen	29	Pakistan	12 years	5 months	Refused asylum-seeker	Divorced, no children	Charitable housing, Manchester	Charity premises	College	Ineligible to work	Student	Muslim
16	Rupinder	40	Pakistan	1.5 years	3 months	Asylum-seeker	Married, no children	NASS, London	Home	Under-graduate	Ineligible to work	Student & housewife	Muslim

The previous chapter highlighted the messy nature of narratives. It asserted that narratives denote 'life as lived' and are (re)presentations of lives as told to us (Etherington, 2008). They are stories which reconstruct past experiences to a particular audience (in this case me as researcher), for a particular purpose (the research project or other personal motivation) and at a certain time (post-detention and at varying stages of the asylum process). The narratives that participants offered were therefore unique co-creations of the research dynamic, which spoke to and from the political discourses in which we were located.

Binder and Tošić's (2005: 608) observe that the phenomenon of migration and flight is a product of "the interplay of the individual actor, her or his biography, the social environment, the population of the country of origin, the country of origin as a nation-state and, finally, the host country, its authorities and population". While the predominant focus of this thesis is on the lives of women beyond detention, the emphasis that participants placed upon their lives before detention was significant. This included the circumstances which brought them to the UK, their migratory journeys, negotiations with the UK asylum system and experiences of detention. In seeking to unpack the full range of insights afforded by these multilayered narratives, this chapter takes a critical reading of these 'narratives of precarious beginnings'. This analysis in no way seeks to denigrate participants' accounts, only endeavours to better understand how they were (co)constructed, access more nuanced insights of the particular contexts in which these women were located and interrogate how they used these narratives to (re)present themselves. This is achieved through an expository reading of what they said and how they said it.

Drawing from empirical extracts from research interviews and my research diary, I propose that all participants used their narratives to construct themselves as candidates who were 'deserving' as opposed to 'undeserving' candidates of support from the UK. In pursuing this broader agenda, I suggest that participants utilised particular narrative strategies to (re)present particular 'deserving' identities which legitimated their claims for asylum. Whilst this speaks to existing literature from which I later draw, particularly on persecuted victimhood and what constitutes an (un)deserving case, I suggest that a closer examination of participants' accounts offers a more nuanced perspective. I also assert that participants' narratives were influenced by external discourses. While this refers in the main to an asylum discourse, I also discuss the influence of other ideas circulating

within migrant, charitable and detention communities such as on trafficking, persecution and 'resilience'. This reinforces the claims made in the previous chapter that research encounters do not exist in a vacuum and were hybrids of external factors which fed into and helped shape the narratives that were co-created.

The chapter interrogates, and is structured by, three key geographical sites through which participants constructed their 'narratives of precarious beginnings'; narratives of flight and arrival, the asylum process, and Yarl's Wood. Through a critical enquiry of these three sites, I unpack the key narrative strategies that participants employed by drawing on empirical examples. The first explores narratives of flight and arrival, examines how women spoke about their reasons for leaving their country of origin and their journeys to the UK. Journeys to the UK were frequently portrayed as uncertain, with many describing escalating instability after arrival as personal circumstances changed. For some, the period between arrival and detention was relatively short, but others reported up to a decade of 'undocumented' existence which was a defining feature of their narratives. I argue that participants presented themselves as victims through their use of these discourses, but crucially, these were juxtaposed by contrastive identities such as the 'victim/fighter', 'victim/campaigner of human rights', 'victim/desirable professional' and 'victim of trafficking/protective mother'. Not only was the identity of victim reclaimed therefore, women augmented this through the active negotiation of other 'deserving' identities. This section also draws attention to the issue of (lack of) choice and how this was instrumental in women's construction of 'deserving' identities, not least through an engagement with a trafficking discourse.

The second section investigates the asylum system as a further site through which participants presented themselves as 'deserving' individuals. It is asserted that the key narrative strategy employed was a rhetoric of 'not knowing' which justified the choices of most participants not to seek asylum soon after arrival. This was instrumental in framing themselves as unwitting victims of poor advice which was effective in absolving personal blame. Once again I suggest that participants offered other favourable representations including contrastive but complementary identities such as the 'payer of tax'. This section also explores participants' experiences of the asylum system's 'culture of disbelief' and the demands placed upon them to provide evidence.

The third section interrogates narratives of Yarl's Wood. All respondents had been detained in Yarl's Wood IRC in Bedfordshire at varying stages of their time in the UK, the length of incarceration ranging from one week to 22 months. This section highlights a number of narrative strategies,

including the reporting of punitive and infantilising treatment by detention staff which were key to how women constructed themselves as ‘victims’. While I allude throughout the chapter to the influence of external discourse on women’s narratives, this section takes a particular focus on these, from the propagation of ideas about the asylum system within migrant communities, popular media representations of asylum seekers and active use of the media and a legalised immigration discourse. It is also asserted that a further narrative strategy employed was the use of visceral, embodied accounts to convey experiences of abuse and ill-treatment which were significant in reinforcing ‘deserving’ subjectivities.

Table 4.1: Summarising participants’ narratives of precarious beginnings and their decision-making.

	Name*	Reasons offered for migration	Why the UK as destination	Fleeing ‘persecution’ before flight	Children left behind	Existing family/friends in UK	Sought asylum on arrival	Prison sentence in UK
1	Jennifer	Political instability & sexual violence	Agent’s choice	✓	✓		✓	
2	Jana	Political persecution & sexual violence	Agent’s choice	✓	✓		✓	
3	Bella	Study & live with British husband	Husband’s British nationality			✓		✓
4	Khanara	Moved with family as a child	Family’s choice					
5	Janet	Repaying loan sharks	Trafficked*	✓	✓			✓
6	Tulisa	Domestic violence	Trafficked	✓				✓
7	Ella	Political instability & persecution	Trafficked	✓	✓			✓
8	Amelia	Sexual orientation-based persecution	Existing family in UK	✓		✓		
9	Laura	Political instability & persecution	Existing family in UK	✓	✓	✓		
10	Mya	Work role	Relocated by employer			✓		

11	Pru	Political instability & sexual violence	Trafficked	✓	✓			✓
12	Haben	Religious persecution	Reputation for support	✓			✓	
13	Mary	Political instability & sexual violence	Existing family in UK	✓		✓	✓	
14	Berdour	Political instability & persecution	Existing family in UK	✓		✓	✓	
15	Noreen	Arranged marriage	Husband country of residence			✓		
16	Rupinder	Persecuted by family	Opportunity to study	✓				

\*I problematise the use of the term ‘trafficked’ later on in this section.

#### 4.1 Narratives of flight and arrival

Holtz (1998) observes that the flight into exile is often neglected by migration literature beyond passing acknowledgements of traumatic events as ‘push factors’ and the exacerbating implications for health. The focus instead remains on the journey or, more importantly, on integration in the host country upon arrival, representing the self-interested endeavours of developed, receiving countries to assess the impact and pressures of forced migration. The reasons for leaving their country of origin or being later unable to return were emphasised by most participants. These justifications become narrative ‘anchors’ of sorts which were instrumental in constructing ‘deserving’ identities. These reinforced the poor treatment that many women had fled from or which they wanted to avoid returning to. These narratives legitimised claims for asylum and, from an early stage in their narrative, constructed themselves as individuals who could not go back home. The reasons given for migrating fitted two broad categories; the majority who described themselves as having fled violence or persecution, and the minority who had left temporarily for work, education or to be with a husband or family. For those in the latter group, circumstances had reportedly changed after arrival and, in most cases, they had felt unsafe to return to their country of origin. With the exception of Bella, all participants had sought asylum in the UK. I examine these two groups in more depth and how these narratives were used to construct ‘deserving’ subjectivities.

#### 4.1.1 'Fleeing persecution'

As summarised in Table 1, a large number of respondents cited some kind of persecution as the primary reason for leaving their country of origin. The majority (12) had intentionally left after circumstances in their home country became unsafe or untenable and in many cases when their lives were felt to be at risk. The prevalence of a particular lexicon of persecution within many narratives is not surprising given its centrality within key legal frameworks; indeed, the Refugee Convention clearly states that a refugee is someone who has a well-founded fear of persecution. Crucially, these narratives of persecution were central to participants' self-identification as victims who by nature of these accounts were deserving of protection.

"I came fleeing persecution in Rwanda, my husband was a soldier, actually he was a presidential guard, of the ex-president [...] one time they came and took him for good. They beat us up, they beat the children there was rape, there was a lot of things. So I had to, it was a very horrific experience. So the next day the morning I had to call one of my husband's friends, who came and took me and took my children, I had three children and took me somewhere just to be safe [...] I escaped after one month I left him with my children and I came to UK and claimed asylum." Jana

The circumstances that Jana described were so dangerous and frightening that she felt her children were safer without her and she fled her home, planning to send for them from a place of refuge. The strain on women forced to leave their children behind is often overlooked when considering the needs of migrant women (Dumper, 2002). For the six respondents who left children behind, the decision itself and the on-going, in most cases indefinite, separation and uncertainty about the safety of their children was critical in how they constructed their narratives of flight, arrival and life beyond as precarious and the gendered nature of this (Reyes, 2007). Whilst in no way seeking to take away from the unimaginable suffering and guilt this separation evoked for these mothers, it may not be hard to understand why some women wanted to emphasise the extreme circumstances resulting in this most difficult of choices. Nor is it surprising that in seeking to represent themselves as individuals 'deserving' of protection, participants might have been more inclined to highlight the most extreme examples which evidenced their suffering and hardship.

While an important outcome of these narratives was the self-identification as persecuted individuals who were forced to make a terrible choice, enduring separation from children (and subsequent treatment in the UK) was equally strategic in foregrounding subjectivities as resilient 'fighters' who

would not give up for their children's benefit. These contrastive positionalities are illustrated through the two following extracts from Jennifer's narrative;

"What keeps me strong and what keeps me going is I never know if they will find my children [...] sometimes I feel like I better not be in this world but when my mind goes back... I remember oh, I have kids, they are alive maybe, some people have found their kids. It gives me more courage to keep on". Jennifer

"What have I done to be put in a prison [detention]? I've done no criminal record. I came to ask for safety and now I'm criminalised, put in prison [...] I have learned that you seek for protection, instead of protection, the trauma I have gone through.. I came to this country, I got more on top of what I had... so trauma will never end in my life 'cos the same, same things happen here." Jennifer

These extracts underscore a key theme to which I return throughout this chapter; contradictory subjectivities, in this case the 'victim/fighter', which women employed to legitimise entitlements for asylum. In the first extract Jennifer illustrates the extent of her suffering through her separation from her children and periodic thoughts of ending her life ("I feel like I better not be in this world"), but this was juxtaposed against her determination not to give up hope of finding her children. A discourse of persecution was central to this, not just in framing circumstances in her country of origin, but her on-going treatment in the UK as detailed in the second quote. Indeed, Jennifer suggests that the 'trauma' she experienced in Somalia was exacerbated by the trauma of being detained in the UK, reinforcing herself as a victim (which in turn reframes her resilience as perhaps even more admirable). These juxtapositions were instrumental overall in strengthening representations of self as 'deserving'.

While it is agreed that women are exposed to a wide range of persecution and human rights abuses owing to their specific role and status in society more generally, it is also widely acknowledged that the Refugee Convention remains gender-neutral and international law neglects to acknowledge the multiple, often invisible and in some cases unique, forms of persecution that women experience (Asylum Aid, 2012; Bloch et al., 2000). A consequence of this is that women often lack the same legal protection as men because the harm faced by women asylum seekers may not be defined as persecution (Bissland and Lawand, 1997). Proponents demand a more "gender-sensitive legislation [that] acknowledges women's experiences and questions aspects of the role and status of women in

society and in particular women's secondary status within the refugee process" (4). For many participants who perceived themselves as having been persecuted both in the country of origin and the UK, accounts were inherently gendered, precipitated by sexual violence, attracting unwanted attention following political involvement and domestic abuse.

Several participants made strategic use of a discourse of gendered persecuted victimhood. Laura who was particularly literate in women's rights and gender politics underscored her status as a woman and the extent to which her breach of codes of acceptable behaviour in Malawi had perpetuated her persecution;

"They elected me as a member of parliament and then I lost when elections came. Another party was ruling, my party lost, it was all hell for me. I had a construction company, I won some contracts [but] they chased me away from the construction place 'cos now I was in opposition [...] I went into politics because I was fighting for women. When poverty strikes it strikes women and children as well the most, that was my point and I had a charity, human women's rights so my duty was telling the women their rights, stand up and be active so we did that and again that didn't go well with men, they were always against me." Laura

A crucial feature of Laura's narrative was its gendered nature. She stressed that the resistance she faced by male counterparts to her political activism was all the more vehement because she sought to represent and invest in women's rights whilst personally transgressing normative identities by becoming a politician and business woman. Once again this particular narrative resulted in a negotiation of contradictory identities of 'victim/fighter'. Whilst Laura portrayed herself as a campaigner of women's rights thus adding moral weight to her self-perceived right to remain and seek protection in the UK, an additional feature of her narrative was her poor health, and the ill-fate she would likely face if returned to Malawi. The active negotiation of these two contradictory, yet mutually reinforcing identities, was to actively strengthen an overall narrative of being 'deserving' of protection. This spoke to and made strategic use of a gendered discourse of persecution which was infused with feminist values of which Laura was aware and actively employed. Laura's representation of self in this way may well have been influenced what she thought I wanted to hear, given that Laura was aware of my research interests in feminist geographies and may have made (quite accurate) assumptions about my moral and ethical sensibilities.

Rupinder also described her reasons for being in the UK within a discourse of gendered persecution, as evidenced in the following quotes;

“In Pakistan, women is property of man, even property of father, property of brothers. No one wants to snatch their property, no one wants [...] they say me I have been snatched. [My husband] have taken their property.” Rupinder

“I am very sorrowful in so many problems. I have no children, I have no parents, there are so many problems. Just my husband he’s very nice with me, he cooperate with me, very good to me. He’s lovely, lovely husband and every time he looks after me. If the woman or girls ill then the males leave them not just in Pakistan, the whole world. I am lucky.” Rupinder

Rupinder explained that although she had gone willingly with her husband (whom she had married for love instead of through an arranged marriage), she was perceived by her family as ‘stolen property’. While this represented her as a victim of persecution by her family, she later acknowledged how lucky she was to have husband who treated her well and her determination not to be returned and lose her relationship.

#### *4.1.2 Narratives of ‘blocked return’*

A minority of participants (Khanara, Noreen, Mya and Bella) reported that after arriving in the UK on visiting or family visas, their circumstances changed and they resisted return. This excludes those who had arrived on visiting visas as a way of gaining access to the UK with the intention of seeking asylum after arrival. This is what Day and White (2002) call a ‘blocked return’ scenario. Because decisions to stay in the UK permanently occurred after arrival and often after some time, these four participants emphasised not only the disruptive nature of their experiences but the gendered nature of these accounts.

Khanara told how she had come to the UK as a child with her family and then experienced several years of domestic violence and attempts by her stepfather to sell her. After he was deported back to Mongolia, Khanara and her mother sought asylum. The reasons given was that they feared for their safety should they return. Similarly, Noreen explained that she had come to the UK with her husband on a spousal visa but when she chose to leave him after years of domestic violence, she was threatened with death by her family in Pakistan.

“When I am talking with my parents and my parents said I have fault. My fault. They say you don’t need to come. If you come here your father will kill you. Because my father he told me, he said, you’re staying with him until you die, you die. Don’t need to come back our house.” Noreen

By leaving her husband Noreen had transgressed the roles of dutiful daughter and wife, leaving her vulnerable to violence from her male relatives (Gill, 2004). Noreen’s identities were not however straightforward as whilst she constructed herself as someone deserving of protection owing to her vulnerability, she also forged a representation of herself as someone who was a fighter that was not scared and had found her autonomy after 12 years in the UK;

“12 years is a long time. Before 10 years I knows Pakistan, I knows everything. Now, when I was in detention centre, now I came out, I forgot. [...] I don’t know which, like, Pakistan now is dirty or same? When I am thinking too much then I know Pakistan is not good, you know Pakistani people they are crazy. You maybe heard from the news they have rape and they are using guns, they killing everyone, very, very bad now. When I heard from in news and I feel bad, Pakistani people are not good.” Noreen

These two quotes reveal something of Noreen’s different representations of self. In the first she portrays herself as a victim who is at risk if returned to Pakistan, and in the second she distances herself from ‘Pakistani people’ who are by her account ‘crazy’ and ‘not good’. Noreen’s disassociation can be seen as strategic in representing herself not only as a victim but someone of ‘higher’ moral standing who no longer fits in a Pakistan which is ‘dirty’ and full of ‘crazy’ people. This further strengthened her identity as a candidate deserving of protection in the UK. This speaks to Kea and Robert-Holmes (2013) observations that Gambia women in their study relied upon representations of the home country as an unsafe place which cast them as victims of sorts. In renouncing Pakistan and welcoming me to reflect on news reports, Noreen was arguable seeking my collusion which would have strengthened her narrative.

Mya’s account of ‘blocked return’ was somewhat different from those discussed above. She also described some difficulty when she reported her passport missing and resisted the assumption that she wanted to stay in the UK;

“They think you love their country, that’s why the visa expired, that’s why the things happened, it’s just a way of staying in the country but sometimes it’s not the case.” Mya

Mya expressed resentment at being accused of ‘tricking’ her way into staying when she said she wanted to return to her home country. She had come on a working visa but when circumstances changed in her country of origin she was unable to return. Unlike other participants, Mya was unwilling to go into details about these circumstances but communicated frustration at the Home office’s disbelief of her story. Her representation of self therefore was as someone who was a ‘victim of false accusation’; someone who was accused of duping the system but who in actual fact had no choice but to remain. Mya’s resistance was her evidence of ‘authenticity’ and which she used to legitimise her place in the UK.

Of the four participants who experienced ‘blocked return’, Bella’s case was unusual as she had not sought asylum and so was never an asylum-seeker. Bella had come to the UK with her British husband who died before she successfully applied for British citizenship. When the UKBA unexpectedly raided her family home and discovered false documents, Bella was sent to prison and then detained. Of all the participants, Bella’s narrative most strenuously denied wrongdoing which is understandable perhaps given that the charges against her were the most serious, including charges of human trafficking though these were eventually dropped. UK law stipulates that non-citizens from outside Europe sentenced to more than 12 months custody in England and Wales, and European Economic Area (EEA) nationals sentenced to more than 24 months, be deported at the end of their sentence (Bosworth, 2011: 583). Bella had however fought removal with legal and charitable support and was granted bail to NASS accommodation in London, contingent upon her compliance with a curfew and electronic tagging. This success was largely dependent upon Bella’s three children who had British nationality and lived in the UK. At the time of fieldwork, Bella’s case still remained uncertain and she continued to fight deportation.

Bella’s narrative was constructed as a legal defence, dominated by the circumstances leading to the charge of trafficking, her imprisonment and then detention. The following extract reflects the extensive, descriptive details around her care of a young girl who went missing and who she was later charged with trafficking;

“When she got unwell I took her to St. Mary [hospital]. Immigration came to the house. [...] I took her to St. Mary hospital we went there on the 15th in the evening to the 16th I stayed

there until about 4am in the morning, came back because of the children, went back in the afternoon, did the translation for the doctor because she was speaking only French and er after the translation left [...] the 17th the police come to my house around 6, 7 o'clock looking for her and I say "no, she's in the hospital, what happened?" Well I say "she feeling unwell so I took her to the hospital" and they say "oh, we're going straight there" and that was the last time I ever saw the girl." Bella

As this quote suggests, a prominent characteristic of Bella's narrative was the 'factual' information about her involvement with the girl which she used as evidence to absolve her of blame. Not only had this charge interfered with her application for British citizenship, Bella's incarceration had resulted in her children being taken into care and other financial hardships. Despite Bella's ill-feeling towards the UK her identity as a 'Foreign National Offender' (FNO) was so debilitating with regards to her future prospects that she felt bound to continue pursuing British citizenship as this could only improve matters. Bella's representation of self was also as a 'victim of false accusation' which was strategic in constructing a deserving subjectivity.

#### *4.1.3 Constructing discourses of 'choice'*

Contrary to common perception that the UK is chosen because of its reputation as a 'soft touch'<sup>16</sup> research shows that those fleeing persecution sometimes have very little choice with regards to their destination, and arrival in the UK remains coincidental (Morrison, 1998, Black et al., 2006). Havinga and Böcker (1999) note that the choices migrants make are heavily reliant on the nature of their departure; while those with the liberty of planning their journey tend to appraise potential host countries based on factors such as colonial linkages or existing friends and family, those fleeing unexpectedly are less preoccupied with the destination and more on making the journey itself. Table 1 shows that participants in this study were split in the degree of choice they claimed to have over their destination. The degree of choice women professed to have in regards to their destination played an important part in how they constructed themselves. Over half (7) of respondents said they had actively chosen the UK as their destination, citing existing social networks and work prospects in the UK. While many of these women made clear their active agency in this process, the way this was presented was equally central to how they constructed themselves as deserving of a place in the UK.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2166738/Soft-touch-Britain-asylum-seeker-capital-Europe-We-let-year.html>

When her safety was threatened in Sudan, Berdour had orchestrated her journey to the UK by relying upon professional contacts;

“At the time of the war started in Darfur and all the damage, the torture, the killing, the rape, we were witnesses, the doctors [...] so we tried to prove, and get evidence what’s going on, really and pass it to the human rights [organisations] to expose the government. And this was the big problem, they put me and my colleague in office at government and we were questioned by the authorities, the local authorities in Darfur and then they brought us to Khartoum and we are being interrogated about what we be doing [...] they put my name on the list, I could not work as a doctor in Khartoum, I couldn’t work anywhere and they watching us what we are doing [...] So I decide to come here. I came with a visa because I’m like a doctor and I be working, I met one lady, she was working in one organisation in Darfur [...] she had a friend, doctor as well here in Portsmouth he’s a Sudanese [...] and he been here for long, long time he working as a consultant and she contacted him and he agreed to send me invitation as a training doctor in the hospital where he is working. That’s how I got a visa.” Berdour

Berdour’s representation of herself as a doctor who was oppressed for disclosing human rights violations made for a persuasive depiction of someone who was deserving of a place in the UK. This managed to simultaneously evoke contrastive subjectivities of ‘victim’ and ‘campaigner of ‘human rights’. She also illustrates how her identity as a professional woman was reinforced by the opportunities this status had afforded her a route out of Sudan. Emphasising her fallen status of doctor in Darfur was critical in underscoring all that she had been denied, the sacrifices she had gone to shed light on the governments’ wrongdoing and measures taken to ensure her personal safety. This was also important in contesting the deviant subjectivities ascribed to her as an asylum seeker which further strengthened her identification as a worthy candidate.

“It’s frustrating, so frustrating, and people think... people thinks about you like asylum seeker, they think asylum seekers are... they don’t know nothing, they just came from the savage Africa! Here to take over your life, your work, your jobs, your house, they don’t evaluate people correctly. They is very intelligent people amongst asylum seekers, there’s doctors, teachers, pharmacists, very intelligent and educated people.” Berdour

Berdour's account explicitly acknowledges circulating, negative representations of asylum-seekers and actively contested these by assertively (re)presenting herself as 'intelligent' and 'educated', and therefore 'desirable'. In this way, Berdour's active choice to come to the UK as a professional woman was to underscore the contribution that she could make to society yet which she was denied from making by the withdrawal of Home Office support<sup>17</sup>. This was strategic in conveying a co-dependent identifies of 'victim/desirable professional', whereby because Berdour's capacity to contribute to the UK was denied this only strengthened her identification as a victim of prejudice denied the opportunity to flourish (and contribute to the UK). These were powerful in reconfirming her identity as a worthy, indeed desirable, individual who had exercised her choice to come to the UK.

Laura also highlighted her agency in choosing the UK as a destination where her family lived and to whom she had a duty of care;

““[I] wish the outer world know more about women who come here. They don't come here for a jaunt, they want to do something to help themselves and their family. It's actually poverty which pushes women too much [...] we wanted to help, we don't want to sit down and be begging or be complaining, crying, we want to go out there and work, we didn't come here just to get free monies.” Laura

A narrative strategy employed by Berdour, Laura, and other participants was to speak for a broader group of people; 'asylum-seekers', 'migrant women' or 'women'. While this might be seen as an effort to 'hide' behind others it could also be understood as an attempt to add weight to their personal experiences, bolstering their accounts to make them more convincing. While Laura emphasised that women (like her) made active choices to come to the UK and did so to help themselves and their families, the legitimacy of this was augmented by her depiction of her home country, Malawi, as poor and lacking in provision to meet her complex health needs;

“Malawi's a very poor country [Long pause] and my health condition means if I go back I won't get much help on the kidney side of it and my children as well I won't be able to assist them.” Laura

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<sup>17</sup> Because Berdour's NASS support had been rescinded, she had had to move into charity funded accommodation which was too far from the venue where she had been undergoing the conversion training required to practice as a doctor in the UK.

This again echoes Kea and Robert-Holmes' (2013) observations that their Gambian participants employed derogatory representations of the home country as an unsafe place on which the production of victim identities relied. Similarly, Laura represented herself as a victim of poverty whose life was at risk from an inadequate health service. This was, in fact, a persuasive argument acknowledged by the UKBA as Laura had been granted temporary admission to receive medical treatment (though this had not amounted to leave to remain at the time of fieldwork). Yet again however, the victim identity was juxtaposed against Laura's representation of migrant women as willing and capable to help themselves when given the opportunity, emphasising qualities of resilience and determination which arguable made them more 'deserving' and 'desirable'. This highlights another example of a personal narrative being used to construct contrastive, yet mutually reinforcing identities, in this case 'victim/fighter' which Laura used to legitimise her claims to asylum.

For the four participants who described themselves as having been trafficked to the UK, the issue of choice was particularly pertinent, notably the lack of choice. Pru, Janet, Tulisa and Ella's constructions as 'trafficked women' were inextricable from their representation as victims and individuals deserving of protection. Furthermore, as I go on to suggest the (lack of) choice and victim identities were co-contingent. In order to consider more critically the framing of their experiences within a discourse of trafficking, it is useful to examine the contrastive interpretations and applications in circulation. The burgeoning literature has highlighted a shared moral outrage at the trafficking of vulnerable people by a range of stakeholders (Stepnitz, 2012). Other authors such as Anderson and Andrijasevic (2008) have, however, insisted that underlying the seemingly cohesive approach to trafficking exists more complex, political tussles. They argue that the moral panic over trafficking has resulted in the locus of attention being placed on individual perpetrators. This has deflected scrutiny from the structural, systemic factors which construct and perpetuate the conditions which allow individuals to be exploited. Indeed, these authors assert that state approaches to migration and employment "effectively constructs groups of non-citizens who can be treated as unequal with impunity" (135).

The legal framework underpinning international responses to trafficking and smuggling is rooted in the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (2000), also known as the Palermo Protocol. This was created to "promote interstate cooperation in the combating of transnational organised crime and to eliminate 'safe havens' for its perpetrators" (Anderson and Andrijasevic, 2008: 136). This, and additional protocols, define trafficking as "the recruitment, transportation,

transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons” occurring though “the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person”. In contrast, smuggling is defined as “the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident”. Whilst international guidance ostensibly underscores tackling trafficking as a key international priority, a closer engagement reveals a focus less on human rights and more on the protection of borders. This means that trafficked individuals are not exempt from potential prosecution and state protection is entirely optional (Gallagher, 2001). The priority of nation states ultimately remains immigration control which often blurs the smuggled/trafficked distinction. The implementation of immigration controls is perceived as complicit in the construction of categories of people vulnerable to abuse by equipping employers with the legal power to further their grip on these individuals (Anderson, 2007: 7).

The protection of individuals vulnerable to exploitation remains weak therefore and legal obligations to protect them minimal. Despite consensus that the trafficking of people is a shared international problem, the stance taken by other stakeholders such as agencies, organisations and lobby groups continues to be polarised, owing to contrastive political and ethical perspectives. Anderson (2007; 2007b) notes that this undermines a united approach which disrupts the effective management of trafficking across international borders with key political and practical implications. Anderson distinguishes between ‘feminist abolitionist’ NGOs, migrants’/workers/human rights organisations; and states. Key to the divergent approaches taken by these stakeholders are differing perspectives on sexual exploitation and prostitution which are prevalent within popular trafficking discourses. There is conflation for example between definitions and perceptions of ‘illegal immigration’, ‘forced prostitution’ and ‘trafficking’, exacerbated by straightforward binaries (also adopted by politicians, journalists and scholars) which portray migrant women working in the sex industry as victims and traffickers as those who enslave them. Anderson and Andrijasevic (2008) observe that the real picture is far more nuanced and that this must be conceptualised through considerations of the politics of sex, the politics of labour, and the politics of citizenship.

Pru, Janet, Tulisa and Ella self-identification as ‘trafficked women’ was key to their representations of deserving subjectivities, indeed Anderson and Andrijasevic (2008: 135) observe that the “image of the Victim of Trafficking is used to invoke an emotional reaction” which was in recent times has

evoked emotions of pity, rather than fear as it has done in the past. In the midst of what she described as harrowing and precarious circumstances in her country of origin, Pru described meeting a man who had offered to take her to safety;

“I didn't even understand that I was in Heathrow. I didn't know how, the journey between Burundi and Heathrow, I didn't know it because I had problems back home, I was raped by soldiers I was beaten up, I was in the bush that's where the man got me. I had nothing, I was in the bush, I was bleeding. [He] offered to bring me out of the country and he instead brought me to England. He said he would take me somewhere I would be safe instead he took me to his friends for sex. I was being used for nothing, whenever I would refuse they will mistreat me, they won't give me food they won't do anything for me and they would keep me locked indoors for three and a half years.” Pru

Pru's account was no less a 'narrative of horror', from her initial deception by the man she met, through to her prolonged captivity and exploitation. Her account of 'being trafficked' was evocative and powerful, painting a convincing depiction of herself as a victim. This was defined by complete powerlessness and lack of choice over her destination. Indeed, Pru emphasised that it was only after escaping her captors after three and a half years that she discovered where she was. Despite the horrors described by Pru at the time of fieldwork she was still an asylum-seeker and told of a precarious existence in temporary accommodation. In constructing herself as someone who had been trafficked, tortured and then denied protection from the state, Pru represented herself as the 'victimised victim'; a vulnerable, exploited woman who was abandoned by the state. Indeed, while Pru asserted that she was released from detention after it was accepted she had been tortured<sup>18</sup> was denied NASS support, forced to sleep rough and depend on the ethical sensibilities of others.

Like Pru, Janet's account of being 'trafficked' was equally evocative. She described how after finding herself in debt in Nigeria, she had been faced with a terrible decision; to allow a gang to take her daughter as payment or going willingly with them herself to 'work off the debt'. After choosing the latter, Janet spoke of how she spent the first six months being moved between different West African cities where she was kept in hotels and raped by innumerable men. When she protested and

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<sup>18</sup> Rule 35 (3) of the Detention Centre Rules (2001) was created to identify people who have been tortured and prevent their detention.

tried to leave, Janet told how she was severely beaten and her treatment worsened. On her arrival to the UK Janet described how she was 'sold' to another group of men to work and pay off the arrears; forced into slave labour, prostituted by her captors and taken to work in nightclubs after which her pay was confiscated. Janet explained how her situation only changed when she finally managed to escape after four years. Janet's identification as a 'trafficked woman' came to play a key role in her asylum claim but only after she had discovered and learned to 'speak' a certain asylum discourse to which trafficking was key;

"So when I was in the prison, I told them I want to claim asylum because one lady an officer in the prison said "Janet, how did you come to this country?" and I was telling the woman, and the woman said they are going to deport me and if you just claim asylum, just say you're claiming asylum because somebody trafficked you and just tell immigration I'm claiming asylum." Janet

While Janet was still awaiting a Home Office decision, her status as someone who had been trafficked played an important role in her asylum claim. This extract highlights, however, that it was only after 5 years in the UK, and whilst in prison, that Janet had learnt to frame her experiences within a trafficking discourse. Until this point, Janet claimed to be unaware of her entitlements to seek asylum and feared for her life from her captors. This highlights the critical importance of fluency in an 'asylum dialect' and how this may be circulated between actors; in Janet's case those she met in prison. Whilst Janet was lucky to learn and make effective use of this before she was deported, it begs the question of what happens to those who are in need of protection but are less informed.

A crucial feature of Janet's narrative was choice and the criticality of this in her construction of herself as a candidate deserving of protection. In the first instance she underscored how she had actively chosen to go with the gang to spare her daughter, a detail which arguably represented her favourably. Janet's later narrative, however, emphasised her lack of choice, reframing herself as a victim of slavery. Janet's narrative reveals another example of the strategic representation of self as a deserving candidate, augmented by the contradictory but mutually reinforcing identities of victim (of trafficking), and in this case the 'protective mother'.

As a 'refused asylum-seeker', Tulisa's narrative was heavily preoccupied with reframing herself as someone who, despite her Home Office refusals, was deserving of protection and arguing her case to remain. Central to this was her identity as a 'trafficked woman';

"I started to run away [...] there was an agent, this lady who brought me here, she was making me do prostitution and selling myself you know? She said "I'll help you to come over, I do that for girls, bring them, traffic them into the county". That's when I heard of trafficking I never knew, she just smuggled me from Africa and brought me here, and I when I came here, put me one place, I never been here, I'd never been to England, I was sleeping with men to give up... she took all the passport and everything." Tulisa

While Tulisa's identity as a 'trafficked woman' was instrumental to her construction of someone needing protection, her interchangeable use of 'prostitution', 'agent', 'trafficking' and 'smuggled' is revealing, echoing observations by Anderson and Andrijasevic (2008) that these terms are often conflated within public discourse and which ultimately undermines useful debate. Although Tulisa's quote might suggest some confusion with regards legal categories it also highlights that, contrary to attempts by legal actors to represent neat cases, real life experiences are rarely clearcut.

The fourth participant who presented herself as a 'victim of trafficking' was Ella, though her account was the most ambiguous;

"I had to pay some money to an agent, he brought me down here but I didn't actually know I was going, I was coming to the UK [...] when arriving in the UK things were not good 'cos I didn't have any money. I didn't know anything, [pauses] it was like a handover, so what happens I waited, I waited, I couldn't see him but it was one of those things, "is this man going to kill me? Is he going to abuse me?" Obviously I didn't have a phone on me, I didn't have any means of communication. Anyway, what happened someone, in the evening, late in the evening someone came to the door, it was a man [...] And the man took advantage of me, he used me... so I was there like four days, he would go to work and come back, I couldn't open the door." Ella

While Ella portrayed herself as someone with agency by seeking out an 'agent' to find a route out of Uganda, she went on to represent herself as a 'victim of trafficking' who had no idea of her destination and on her arrival to the UK found herself held captive and sexually exploited. Legal

definitions of trafficking state that a 'victim of trafficking' can be someone who gave their initial consent but this was "made irrelevant because of use of force, coercion, at any stage of the process" (ICMPD, 2014). This, and Ella's account, suggests some ambiguity with regards the exercise of agency. This speaks to the contrastive positions taken by key stakeholders within broader trafficking debates. 'Abolitionist feminists' who take the view that all prostitution is intrinsically objectifying and damaging to women have been criticised by those endorsing 'sex workers' rights' for their oversight of women's agency and refusal to perceive women who sell sex as anything other than victims. Anderson (2007) insightfully outlines the deeply problematic nature of 'consent', particularly for those who have limited choices, for example because of poverty, and how this speaks to the often contested distinctions between 'forced' and 'free' prostitution. The implications are significant to debates around trafficking, creating a key challenge of "how to avoid it being used as a mechanism for distinguishing between the woman who "chooses" prostitution who is guilty and does not deserve human rights protection (she is "smuggled"), and the woman who is "innocent" and does (she is "trafficked")" (10). Because the stance adopted by nation states varies so greatly, measuring and tackling exploitation remains problematic.

All four women who constructed themselves as 'trafficked women' underscored their powerlessness and lack of choice over their situations and destination. Despite this emphasis, however, there was a point at which choices were made, though undoubtedly within the context of terrible suffering and between the 'better of two evils'. Indeed in her reflection on 'choice' Shifman (2003: 127-128) observes that "this kind of discourse in relation to women migrants who are trafficked [...] is a dangerous discourse for women who have no choice, really, in their lives" when faced with violence and poverty. As the cases of, Pru, Janet, Tulisa and Ella highlight, experiences of exploitation exist on a continuum, with innumerable contexts, circumstances, and expectations; "[i]deas about the precise point on this continuum at which tolerable forms of labour migration end and trafficking begins will vary according to our political and moral values" (11). It is this continuum that these women treaded throughout their narratives, and whilst Tulisa for example used 'smuggled' and 'trafficked' interchangeably to frame her experience, consciously or not, her self-identification as a trafficked woman was strategic in constructing herself as someone 'deserving' of protection. Similarly, whilst Ella framed her experiences within a trafficking lexicon, consenting to leave with someone she had paid to facilitate her journey out of Uganda might have 'muddied the waters', reframing her perhaps as a smuggled individual whose entitlement to support as outlined in the Palermo Protocol were significantly less had she been 'truly' trafficked. Clearly the distinctions between 'trafficked' and 'smuggled' is far from straightforward, exacerbated by vague legal

definitions. Indeed, Anderson (2007b: 6-7) observes that the protocol does not adequately resolve the distinctions between smuggling and trafficking networks, which creates a group of vulnerable individuals who are exempt from protection. By taking on the the identity of the 'victim of trafficking' these participants were certainly buying into a certain identity politics but as their accounts suggest the full complexity of this was perhaps not fully understood from the outset and one that was acquired over their time in the UK. Regardless of when this knowledge was acquired, all participants used it to legitimise their place in the UK and strengthen a broader and more persuasive narrative of 'victimhood'.

This section has taken participants' narratives of flight and arrival as a site through which to examine participants' constructions as candidates who were 'deserving' of protection. While this has underscored the gendered nature of these accounts, I have suggested that they actively reconfirmed notions of persecuted victimhood which strengthened what they felt were entitlements to support. This echoes work by Kea and Roberts-Holmes (2013) whose work underscores how their participants remained complicit in the production and application of a victim identity which verified and bolstered their narratives. While representations of self as victims was critical to my participants' representations, I have suggested that these were more nuanced than the existing literature proposes. In particular I have demonstrated that in some cases participants negotiated and deployed contradictory identities which were effective in augmenting their representations as 'deserving' and 'desirable' individuals. These included, the 'victim/fighter', 'victim/campaigner of human rights', 'victim/desirable professional' and 'victim of trafficking/protective mother'. In this way these narrative strategies became opportunities to (re)define themselves, reflect upon experiences of victimisation and in doing so renegotiate currents of power to further more favourable representations. This reflective potential of the narrative research process echoes the methodological framework on which the study is based and further endorses this approach with women who might ostensibly be disregarded as victims without agency. While an undoubtedly diverse group of participants, these narrative strategies reveal something of the commonalities that they women shared by virtue of being ex-detained migrant women and how these were developed through close examination of these geographical sites. In this next section, I explore the asylum system as a further geographical site on which participants utilised other narrative strategies, in particular 'not knowing', and spoke to the ideas in circulation about what constitutes a 'deserving' asylum claim.

## 4.2 Narratives of the asylum process

Media representations often denigrate asylum-seekers for seeking out the UK in order to avariciously 'swindle' the system, but as Gilbert and Koser (2006) assert, that assumes some prior knowledge of the country's rules and regulations. There is firm consensus that the asylum system poses challenges for those negotiating it and that asylum-seekers are often poorly informed about their rights and entitlements (Burnett and Peel, 2001). When considered more critically however, claims of illiteracy in an asylum discourse might be understood to serve a more complex purpose. Indeed, a key narrative strategy used by the majority of participants throughout their discussions of the asylum system, was of 'not knowing', with an emphasis placed upon the fact they had little, to no, prior knowledge of the UK system. This was said to evoke feelings of bewilderment and uncertainty which had wider reaching implications for how everyday life was experienced. Not only did this inform a general discourse of precarity in which the women were located, this strategy remained instrumental in how many women (re)presented themselves. Above all claims of 'not knowing' appeared to be an attempt to absolve blame and strengthen broader 'deserving' subjectivities. This was not however always straightforward as I go on to explore.

### 4.2.1 'Not knowing'

Less than a third (5) of participants (Mary, Jennifer, Jana, Haben and Berdour) sought asylum soon after arrival, and for some, their active, and therefore 'lawful', engagement in this process was instrumental in constructing a positive self-image reinforced by ideas of compliance and submission. Mary was particularly quick to make distinctions between those, like herself, who had behaved 'to the book' and those she felt who took advantage of the asylum system and were therefore 'less deserving'. Her lack of support only added strength to her representation as someone who was 'most deserving' of asylum.

"When I got here I didn't know anybody except a friend. Of course I had to claim for asylum because I had problems back home. So when I went to the Home Office I didn't know anything. It is really strange, it was really, really hard for me [...] This friend of mine wasn't helpful enough. I had to go to Croydon. Alone and Jesus, you even don't understand the map. They ask you to read the map. I have no clue about the map." Mary

Mary's lack of knowledge about her entitlements on arrival was also translated through a poor geographical understanding of her surroundings and a disrupted sense of place, she describes

exacerbated her feelings of vulnerability. Her bewilderment and disorientation was to strengthen a representation of her herself as defenceless; a victim needing protection from the state.

Jennifer described how she sought asylum hours after arriving in the UK, only to be detained straight away;

“We came through an airport with the agent... we drove with a small car in a distance of like four hours or five hours? So I remember, I always see that white house where he told me “go to that house and get help there”, that’s how I ended up in, what do you call that place? Liverpool? Liverpool, yeah [...] before I knew anything I was put on a fast-track [Detained Fast-track].” Jennifer

Timely application to the Home Office on arrival in the UK did not mean more successful outcomes, as Jennifer’s experience shows. Her identification as a vulnerable individual was strengthened by her account of being penalised for complying with the asylum system yet being detained regardless. In this way, her narrative strategy of ‘not knowing’ and innocent compliance within the system was to create an experience of ‘damned if you do, damned if you don’t’ which ultimately cast her as a long-suffering individual who was punished for doing what was right.

The remaining participants waited until later in their stay to seek asylum. Although a minority of these did not yet have need to seek asylum, the majority had chosen not to, going on instead to build a life sometimes over many years. Few conceded that they did this with the full understanding of the illegality of their decision which was crucial in eschewing active responsibility. This speaks to the discussion about about choice and how overt demonstrations of agency might have been to accept fault or blame, disrupting representations of ‘deserving’ subjectivities. Indeed, the majority claimed to only learn about rights to seek asylum later on, maintaining that they had a poor understanding of what it entailed or asserted they were directly discouraged from seeking asylum by others. Tulisa’s account emphatically denied having prior knowledge about the asylum system and her description of enduring a sexually exploitative situation was instrumental in how she evidenced how scared and ‘naïve’ she was. After escaping her trafficker Tulisa explained that she was ‘befriended’ and then manipulated by a woman who took her into her home;

“Yes the girl was a lesbian as well. I have to be with her, like a lesbian girl sleeping with her before she looks for me a job, she had to force me and said “if you don’t I’ll put you outside

and call for the police to take you”, so I was forced to sleep with this girl. [...] So I was even scared, I never, I was so naive.” Tulisa

Like Mary above, characteristics of fear, naivety and vulnerability were instrumental in Tulisa’s portraying herself as a victim. The emphasis on ‘not knowing’ is particularly revealing given that the delay in submitting Tulisa’s initial asylum application had significantly undermined her case, resulting in her legal status as a ‘refused asylum-seeker’. This created an important backdrop to which her narrative was constructed and which perhaps afforded an opportunity to defend her reasons for not seeking asylum straight away, thus (re)confirming her identity as someone who was still ‘deserving’ of protection despite the UKBA’s unfavourable decision.

Pru also used a narrative of fear and ‘not knowing’ to justify why she did not seek asylum;

“I didn’t know anything about seeking asylum, I didn’t. I was fearing anyway, I didn’t want to say “okay please let me go to the authorities, I report me” I would fear maybe they would take me back home [...] so I kept working and looking after myself so I said “now I can manage”.” Pru

In this extract Pru presents an argument which simultaneously denied knowledge of the asylum system and outlines her fear of being returned. Whilst Pru might not have known of her right to seek asylum after escaping her traffickers, it seems unlikely that at the point at which she was caught by the UKBA after 10 years of living in the UK and interacting with a broad migrant community, she was still as uninformed and unaware of her illegal status. For Pru, and other participants, the point at which they became sufficiently informed and made the active decision not to seek asylum was not acknowledged in their interviews. This is not surprising perhaps as to do so would have disrupted their subjectivities as deserving candidates.

Ella was another participant who did not seek asylum straight away and who was detained after being discovered by the UKBA holding false papers and working illegally. She also used her narrative of the asylum system to defend her decision-making, constructing herself as an illiterate in an asylum discourse who was dependent on others for advice/support;

“I didn’t know what asylum was, I didn’t know nothing you know? But she mentioned about the asylum business and the people who used to visit of course and they was saying it was

very hard, that they were returning people to home so it was really difficult [...] when I tried to ask they said “oh don’t even waste your time!” Ella

The consequence of Ella’s claim was to eschew the bulk of personal responsibility, explaining how the circulating ideas within her migrant network had deterred her. There were however some contrastive components of Ella’s narrative which amplified less passive and defenceless representations of self. After being detained and facing deportation before being granted legal representation, Ella swiftly educated herself using legal documents in the Yarl’s Wood library and independently submitted an application for appeal which ultimately deferred her removal. Further still, Ella was keen to stress that despite the illegality of working with false papers, her active contribution to the UK economy had worked to her advantage;

“I went to be sentenced and the judge said “no, I’m not going to deport you, go and get an immigration solicitor and stop using fake papers, you won’t be deported, you’ve been contributing”. ‘Cos they had my payslips. I paid a lot of tax! And my solicitor, my criminal solicitor said “oh, Ella this is too much, this is really bad you’ve paid a lot of tax for nothing!” So the judge appreciated my tax, he said “you haven’t sustained yourself but you’ve sustained even the UK government by paying tax”. Ella

Ella’s example is revealing of the contradictory ways in which she used her narrative to construct different and in some sense incongruous ‘deserving’ identities. Importantly these did not all rely upon being a victim, indeed Ella’s inadvertent financial contribution was to bolster her identity as the ‘payer of tax’; an active, moral contributor to society who was therefore ‘deserving’ at least of a legal defence. This was in contrast to the earlier (although perhaps equally deserving) position of ignorance. As an aside, it remains unclear to what extent individuals who illegally procure national insurance details are able to opt out of making tax contributions, so while Ella was commended for her contributions it was not necessarily her active choice to make these.

Kubal (2012) has argued for an alternative to the legality-illegality binary divide usually used to frame the experiences of migrants. She argues that a new category of ‘semi-legality’ better captures the experiences of individuals, offering a nuanced understanding of migrants’ relationships with host states. Many of my participants’ representations of selves as ‘deserving’ of protection spoke, to varying degrees, to wider discourses of (il)legality (Düvell 2008; Jordan and Düvell 2002; Anderson and Rogaly 2005). At the point of conducting the interviews most women had learned what

happened when the asylum system's rules were subverted (i.e. not claiming asylum straight away and working illegally could result in imprisonment and detention) yet many were keen to stress that they 'had not known' of the rules beforehand. For these women, claims of 'not knowing' was to locate themselves in a grey area with regards the legality of their situations, which could be understood as an argument for 'semi-legality' where their sense of responsibility was unclear.

Regardless of the point of entry, participants' experiences of the asylum system were described as unanimously negative, with innumerable accounts citing the UKBA and Home Office's disorganisation, poor communication and ill-treatment. With the exception of Mya who received a swift Home Office decision, most respondents reported lengthy, protracted periods of waiting which were described as anxiety-provoking and stressful. These experiences are largely corroborated by other stakeholders including the charity workers interviewed. Indeed Burnett and Peel (2001c: 486) observe that the UK asylum process is "lengthy, complicated, and intrinsically stressful, with the continual fear for the asylum-seeker, until the process is complete, of being sent back to the original country". Participants emphasised how 'not knowing' (about their rights, entitlements etc.) manifested a precarious existence defined by uncertainty, perpetuated by the protracted nature of the asylum system and long periods of waiting for Home Office decisions;

"It's the waiting time which is painful, they've got the rules in place but for people to wait the way we wait? We are waiting like now we have nothing, we don't know whether it's day or night. It's very difficult the period for waiting for decision it's hectic because it's a life at the end of the time." Laura

The period of time that respondents spent as asylum-seekers varied from months to several years. Stewart (2005: 501) notes that during this period "asylum-seekers exist in a permanent state of 'in-betweenness', a liminoid condition". It also signals a key bridging point between experiences of detention and life beyond for those with uncertain legal status as both were largely characterised by an indefinite, liminal state of being. This constitutes another example of what Kubal (2012) coins semi-legality where individuals negotiated binary categories of documented and undocumented. This was particularly explicit for Laura, as discussed above, who had been granted a year of discretionary leave to receive medical treatment but whilst this had expired some 8 months before her interview, she continued to live from day-to-day in the home of a friend uncertain of her future.

Berdour explained how her illiteracy in an asylum discourse was caught up in her broader uncertainty about her future in the UK;

“You know you’re so confused, it’s the whole situation. New people, new country, away from home, you don’t know what to do, you don’t know if you’re going to work as a doctor or not, what will happen next, even I didn’t know how to claim asylum or these things, I just wanted to go out of the country, I didn’t know about anything.” Berdour

Like Laura’s emphasis upon the liminality of her daily life, Berdour underscores her powerlessness and ‘not knowing’, presenting herself as someone without blame. Ultimately this strengthened representations of self as ‘deserving’ of protection.

#### *4.2.2 ‘Negotiating a ‘culture of disbelief’*

Proponents concur that the asylum system is defined by a ‘culture of disbelief’ (Griffiths, 2012b, Stepnitz 2012), indeed Griffiths (2012b) identifies a political and institutional emphasis on truthfulness operating in tandem with pervasive representations of asylum-seekers as opportunists willing to dupe, cheat and lie at any opportunity. Many participants appeared acutely aware of the mistrustful environment in which they lived, citing experiences of being branded liars, being misbelieved and their accounts disregarded. In this section I argue that this ‘culture of disbelief’ was revealed through participants’ narratives in two ways. Firstly, participants used their narratives to shed light upon the innumerable examples of being mistrusted. The motivation for doing this appeared to be an attempt to set the record straight, and in doing so redress an imbalance of power. Secondly, the research encounter and participants’ narratives were heavily influenced by the issue of ‘evidence’, in particular how a key narrative strategy used by participants was to offer me ‘evidence’ to support their accounts, resulting in a unique (co)construction. This section examines these two particular avenues and explores how participants’ narratives about this disbelieving culture fed into their production of (un)deserving identities.

Many respondents described frustrating interactions with the Home Office where they felt had been labeled ‘liars’ before they had had a chance to make their case;

“Because immigration, anything that you say for people like us who come here the first answer they tell us is that “you’re lying”, so we are liars whatever we are telling them.”

Laura

“The Home Office person when he came, even before the interview, already he had concluded the case. Even without asking me. This is the time I always ask myself, why were they interviewing me and already he had judged the case? Because he says “no, she’s lying”. He said it in English but I asked the interpreter “what did that man say?” That’s when he explained it to me, so I was shocked, I was like why should he say like that?” Jennifer

By portraying themselves as individuals who were disbelieved by the UKBA before they had been given a chance to explain their story, Laura and Jennifer represented themselves as victims of an unfair system which deprived them of a voice. A key aim therefore was to express outrage at their treatment. Other participants were keen to report examples of where the UKBA had been caught out, which by extension absolved them from blame;

“The immigration said that I did not cooperate with the High Commission, so the judge now asked me, “why don’t you cooperate with the High Commission?” I said to the judge “I’ve been to the High Commission five times and I saw the same man! And I said to the man that I was born in Zimbabwe not in Nigeria.” Janet

“So the judge told them that I’m staying long in the detention, that he is going to grant me bail, [...] he said “if you do not have travel documents for this lady you cannot keep her in detention!”, the judge was so aggressive in the court, he said he was going to release me that day.” Janet

Janet reported that because she could not prove her nationality the UKBA had been unable to secure the travel documents needed to remove her, resulting in Janet’s protracted detention over 22 months (Klein and Williams, 2012). This created a Catch 22 situation where ‘cooperation’ would have equated to agreeing with an incorrect nationality and risking removal to a foreign country (Griffiths, 2012). In the second extract Janet was keen to explain how an immigration judge had reportedly rebuked the UKBA for keeping her detained. For Janet, the ‘endorsement’ of a significant authority figure was not only to exonerate her as a ‘liar’, it was to reframe her as essentially victimised by the UKBA. This echoes Ella’s account, cited above, who after being commended by a judge for making tax contributions felt able to reclaim a more positive subjectivity.

Of central import to respondents’ narratives of the asylum system, caught up with what they understood as their battle against the ‘culture of disbelief’, were issues of evidence. Proponents

argue that the UK's commitment to the 1951 Geneva Convention has created a climate in which proof is legitimately sought, indeed asylum-seekers must prove 'to a reasonable degree of likelihood' that they have a well-founded fear of persecution for one of the reasons specified in the Convention (Sweeney, 2009). It is also acknowledged however that applicants often have little documentary evidence which places asylum-seekers in an impossible predicament that causes great worry and powerlessness;

"The first thing is how to make the Home Office believe you, how to make them believe things you don't have evidence for it, just your word. It's so difficult." Berdour

Many participants expressed frustration at the apparently insatiable requests for evidence which caused great strain;

"Right now I'm thinking about a fresh claim, I told my solicitor "this business of evidence, am I going to cut myself? They want me to cut myself and they can see the pieces?"[...] It drives you mad because they're like playing around with a kid, I'm giving you this doll or this sweet, can you do this? Can I give you a sweet?" See? Bring evidence, crush, bring evidence, crush... more evidence!" Ella

In her framing of the UKBA's demand for supporting evidence, Ella framed herself as a child whom the state toyed with; the recipient of unreasonable demands whose emotions were deliberately manipulated. Not only does conceptualising these demands in embodied terms convey the extent to which Ella felt she gave of herself and depleted her personal resources, it portrays them as unreasonable and unacceptable. This, and the analogy of herself as a child, is effective in representing Ella as a victim.

In the absence of documentary evidence, participants reported that in efforts to 'prove' they had been tortured, they resorted to using their bodies;

"When I was in Yarl's Wood I told them about my human trafficking, my marks [scars] and everything but they didn't believe it so the [charity] now came [...] he sent a doctor to come and look at me [...] Even the doctor wrote a letter to the Home Office about my scars, about everything, about the human trafficking." Janet

Fassin and d'Halluin (2007: 325), speaking of Foucault et al (1994), note that “[t]he extortion of “truth” from bodies and minds to attest experiences of suffering has become a predominant way of exerting power in contemporary societies”. The body is the site on which power is inscribed and used to attest historical events, remaining particularly pertinent for asylum-seekers who may rely upon their bodies as evidence. Whilst placing demands upon Janet to evidence her experiences of torture might be understood as the state extended its biopolitical grip, this was more complex. Janet’s experience had taught her that using her scars was a successful strategy in securing charitable endorsement which supported her asylum claim and had been instrumental in her presentation as a victim, a ‘trafficked woman’ that was ‘deserving’ of support.

It was perhaps the success of this strategy that encouraged Janet to reveal her scars to me during her interview; using her scarred body as evidence to also convince me of her legitimacy. Hollstein and Miller (1990 cited by Kea and Roberts-Holmes, 2013) note that feelings of outrage and sympathy in others are central to the production of victim identities. Not only was Janet’s scarring instrumental in constructing herself as a ‘victim of trafficking’ this was augmented by my presence to witness this and feel outraged at what she had experienced. Whilst the offering of evidence in this respect is instrumental in the construction of victim identities, Kea and Roberts-Holmes (2013) argue that an individual using evidence in this way demonstrates an act of agency and ‘becomes the willing subject of a particular discourse’. Furthermore, this relies to a large extent upon an audience who witnesses the evidence. Janet’s efforts could be seen therefore to reclaim this strategy and renegotiate an imbalance of power.

Janet was not the only participant to offer evidence to augment her narrative during the research encounter. Whilst I did not actively seek these, women eagerly offered sources of evidence to augment their narratives, from written reports, newspaper articles, text messages and scarring. This behaviour spoke of a legacy of demands to evidence claims, a performative demonstration of circulating ideas about what constituted a legitimate claim (one that was ‘provable’ and consistent) and how this was substantiated (through the offering of evidence). The act of offering proof clearly suggests a desire to convince the audience. Not only does this indicate that participants wanted me to believe the version of truths they offered in those particular contexts, it exemplified the influence of outside influences. Whilst the most obvious example was the circulation of ideas about the asylum system, there were other influences such the rhetoric encouraged by key charitable organisations. The following quotes from my research diary and Jana’s interview capture how the research context, and Jana’s narrative, were a hybrid of external discourses and political agendas,

imbued with undercurrents of power. At the core of this was the recorded interview ‘data’ which constituted a key form of ‘evidence’;

“Jana told me that Leah [charity worker and gate keeper] was assisting another woman in court that afternoon and was not at the centre as planned. She seemed unhappy that Leah was not there and said she had been expecting her to be present during the interview. I was hugely relieved as I had found Leah’s presence suffocating during the last interview. [...] Another centre volunteer popped her head around the screen and handed Jana a voice recorder. Jana explained that she wanted to record the interview so she could remember what she had said but also that Leah had suggested it [...] Despite Leah’s physical absence, her presence was still very much felt by me during the interview [...] There was two key points where Jana talked about the degree to which women in detention are motivated to help themselves and are not helpless despite their circumstances. Jana explained the ‘ripple effect’ that happens when a woman suddenly ‘gets’ the need to be directive and instruct her solicitors and how reclaiming this power has a knock-on effect to other relationships in their lives. This was reported in what I would call a ‘Crossroads dialect’, echoing the messages of ‘resilience and strength’ that Leah has emphasised to me repeatedly on and off tape. I wonder to what extent what Jana said was for the benefit of Leah listening back to the tape later on and how her narrative was an attempt to become what she felt she needed to be to satisfy Leah’s expectations of her [...] In retrospect I feel extremely uncomfortable and regret not having been more assertive – though I realise that had I been, Jana might not have talked to me.” Research diary, 12 Dec 2011

“Women in detention really try very hard to fight for themselves, they help each other in their cases they read the guide that is sent in by the Centre and they are more able to make, ‘cos most of the women don’t have solicitors in detention and that can be very challenging when you don’t have even the guidelines to lead you to do anything. That time I went [into Yarl’s Wood] it was after some women had been on hunger strike [...] it helped them because most women were released with the help of the media. Everything came out of the, people started to say “oh my God is this what is happening?” because many people really didn’t know.” Jana

While I have addressed the ethical implications of this dynamic in the previous chapter (not least concerns about confidentiality), both of these extracts exemplify how external influences and discourses seeped into and helped define the research encounter, from the Women’s Centre’s

political rhetoric, overt acts of resistance (i.e. hunger strikes) and the power of media engagement in facilitating the release of women from detention. The diary extract suggests that a combination of factors imposed key guidelines for Jana's 'narrative performance', and arguably mine too. I, for example, felt restricted from asking more critical questions about the Centre. This extract reveals that Jana's construction of herself as a 'fighter' relied upon what I coined a 'Crossroads dialect' which the charity's gatekeeper promoted, and which Jana also perhaps felt obliged to use. The presence of the tape recorder was instrumental in this dynamic. Not only did it foreground the gatekeeper Leah's virtual 'presence', it created a situation whereby Jana's interview could be heard again. Whilst I was already recording the interview for research purposes, the act of recording it on a second device was to open up the research encounter to the scrutiny of potentially multiple audiences and for different purposes. The synergy of this with the state's use of such strategies for surveillance and during asylum interviews was to also evoke an asylum discourse, an additional external influence that undoubtedly influenced how and what Jana and I said and the narrative that was thus co-constructed. Whilst the presence of the voice recorder was ostensibly to provide Jana with a record of the interview for her own records, it was apparent that this would be held by the Centre and could be used for other undisclosed purposes i.e. campaign work. This was in one sense to co-position Jana and I as subjects in the Centre's political activities and add another (largely unclear) power dynamic.

Research interviews with participants were conducted therefore within loaded contexts where ideas circulated about what constituted a 'valid and truthful' asylum claim, set to the backdrop of historical experiences of being misbelieved and detained as a result. The narrative form was itself tarnished as the medium by which participants had previously been discredited within asylum contexts. Clearly, the research interviews offered participants another chance to recount their story to a potentially more sympathetic listener who allowed for a more inclusive account. That said, participants knew of my interest in detention which undoubtedly imposed certain parameters for the research encounters and might account for the emphasis on experiences of incarceration. Nevertheless, the research may also have afforded an opportunity to be more persuasive or offer a different representation of self to a new audience having been misbelieved the first time round. Whilst it is clearly impossible to know exactly what the research encounters meant to participants an important functionality of almost all participants' narratives was the opportunities to report Home Office failures, though as the discussion above attests, this itself served other political agendas. Nevertheless, highlighting the inadequacies of the system which branded them liars and had deprived them of their liberty was to redress an imbalance of power and respond directly to this

culture of disbelief. By emphasising these accounts, most participants strategically represented themselves as unwilling casualties of an inadequate system which, instead of offering protection, had failed them, strengthening by extension their entitlements to support by reclaiming victim identities.

This section has taken the asylum system as a site through to examine participants' narrative constructions of self as 'deserving' of protection from the UK. It has been suggested that a key narrative strategy was of claims of 'not knowing' which above all justified the choices of most participants not to seek asylum soon after arrival and framed them as innocent of willingly duping the system and victims of poor advice. The construction of selves as 'deserving' were further reinforced by other favourable representations such as Ella's 'payer of tax'. This section has also examined participants' experiences of the 'culture of disbelief' within the asylum system and how this also furthered representation of self as victims of an inadequate system which, instead of offering protection, had failed them. In the next section I turn to examine Yarl's Wood as a site through which respondents continued their identity constructions as deserving.

#### 4.3 Yarl's Wood

Feminists have long critiqued media representations which reinforce gender stereotypes and the infantilisation of women in society through their conflation with children (Carpenter, 2013). Indeed, we are long accustomed to emergency protocols which decree 'women and children first!' (Burman, 2008). This conflation is also evident within migratory discourse, not least in statistical reports which present aggregate figures of refugee 'women and children' but omit a genuine breakdown (Valji, 2001: 30). Some argue that conceptually 'womenandchildren' usefully augments the man as the norm and women as dependents, endorsing paternalistic tendencies of receiving states (Peters, 1992). While migrants undoubtedly occupy a homogenous position in the public and political imaginary (Tyler, 2006), there is debate about the portrayal of migrant women. Gedalof (2007: 90) argues that the 'immigrant woman' has come to embody the authorised discourse of government policy, defined by her cultural and linguistic subordination and engagements in so-called (often home-based) 'backward practices'. This informs a postcolonial representation of the immigrant woman as a victim against which more 'progressive' British ideals are vindicated. Paradoxically her role as cultural reproducer also threatens social stability by sabotaging integration, relegating her to the societal periphery (Dossa, 2002). Conversely, others assert that for the forced migrant woman "[h]er identity and her individuality are collapsed into the homogeneous category of 'victim' and community, devoid of agency, unable and incapable of representing herself, powerless and

superfluous” resulting in the “‘infantilisation’ and ‘de-maturation’ of the refugee experience which is a fundamentally disenfranchising process” (Manchanda, 2004: 4179 & 4180).

Commentators of women’s prisons observe that they are “shot through with a viciously destructive paternalistic mentality” (Kurshan, 1997: 14) and that women “are perpetually infantilised by routines and paternalistic attitudes” (Rafter, 1985: 10). Respondents reported numerous ways in which they felt they were reduced to the status of children. This included being given spending money (approximately 70p a day); essentially ‘pocket money’ in return for performing domestic activities. This relied upon “a subtle form of coercion which ensures compliance and discipline and, in so doing, provides a cheap and easily exploitable pool of labour” (Burnett and Chebe, 2010: 95). Regimented routines and regular roll count by detention staff were felt to invade participants’ space, the impact of which was to highlight the everyday freedom, choice and autonomy that were denied to detainees. McLoughlin and Warin’s (2008) observations of an Australian detention centre highlights that daily routines and everyday aspects of life were subjected to the approval, surveillance, restrictions and rules of detention staff, government officials and the detention space itself. Colloquially, ‘detention’ speaks of a school punishment, reframing the state within a paternalistic capacity. Others, like Janet, reported accounts of physical and psychological bullying by detention staff;

“They used to beat people there, they beat the women, taking people to airport and some people would refuse, they wouldn’t go and they beat them up [...] I was beaten naked, only if they want to give you food you can’t enjoy the food even when you standing in the line they take your food and throw it away.” Janet

The descriptions of Yarl’s Wood as both punitive and infantilising were central to how participants framed themselves as deserving of a place in the UK. This relied upon two critical narrative strategies. Firstly, participants represented themselves as recipients of punitive, infantilising measures which aggravated historical experiences of persecution and ‘trauma’. A second strategy was reports of being disbelieved by detention staff;

“I couldn’t walk and they were refusing to give me wheelchair, saying “she’s fine, she’s just acting” you know, “she’s just trying to get our sympathy” [...] I just collapsed on the floor and the nurse come in and said “oh, she’s fine she’s able to walk”. I just kept on like collapsing, like in and out of consciousness so they said I’m not complying with whatever they’re saying

so therefore they need to take me to isolation room. So they like six of, four of them carried me all the way, all the way to the isolation room.” Khanara

Khanara’s account was effective in representing herself as vulnerable, not just because she reported her claims of ill-health were misbelieved, but because detention staff responded with punitive measures. Other women also described accounts where medical treatment was used as a currency of power, with staff questioning the authenticity of symptoms and withholding or incorrectly administering treatment. Indeed, Jana described how her health had suffered because she had been denied treatment;

“I had a problem I suffered from and I came with my medication prescribed from my doctors. They said no, you’re not ill and stopped the medication. I started falling ill and the doctor said its stress, it’s this place, you take Paracetamol and Nurofen you’ll be ok. I got in touch with the Centre [charity] they arranged a doctor who came and saw me but it was my release actually, if I had stayed in that place for another week I would have died.” Jana

Jana told how, on her release from Yarl’s Wood, she was hospitalised for two months and at the time of the interview continued to endure poor long-term health as a result of the delay in receiving timely treatment. Her description of enduring physical suffering was critical in her construction of self as someone who had suffered the inadequacies of medical provision in detention and the consequences of being misbelieved.

Despite her protests, Haben explained how she was given the wrong medication which caused a severe allergic reaction. This threatened her life and resulted in permanent scarring to her face and body which had aged her appearance beyond her 19 years.

“When I see my body and when I see my face yeah of course, I wish I wasn’t in detention before because I look at my face and it looks like old, it’s not really like my natural body.”  
Haben

Working at the body-as-scale reframes bodies as landscapes which offers opportunities to investigate the dynamic interaction of bodies, their everyday practices and global processes; in this case the institutional and political (Dunn, 2010: 4, Winchester et al., 2003). Haben’s scarring added an embodied dimension to her narrative which was important in convincing me of her

representation as someone who had been subjected to medical misconduct, reiterating the importance of ‘witnessing’ in the construction of victim identities (Kea and Holmes-Roberts, 2013).

Participants also ‘spoke for’ other women they had known in detention, citing examples of malpractice which emphasised the inadequacies of Yarl’s Wood’s healthcare provision;

“Yarl’s Wood is a very bad place... and, what I heard about the place, it’s so bad because you find, how can you give a pregnant woman malaria tablets? Even myself, I’m from Africa but you can’t give a pregnant woman malaria tablets... what does it mean? You want her baby to come out? So it’s like killing another people’s baby?” Jennifer

This extract is revealing for several reasons. Firstly, Jennifer’s claim that pregnant women detainees were given anti-malarials appears to be reported secondhand from another source. This is symptomatic perhaps of the contagious nature of storytelling amongst migrant communities, the viral propagation of stories about Yarl’s Wood (most often ‘horror stories’) and how these were spread by word of mouth. It is revealing that in this case the account of pregnant women being ill-treated may actually be based on misinformation<sup>19</sup>. Furthermore, it highlights how the research encounter was equally susceptible to these circulating ideas, becoming a site on which these stories played out and were used to further personal agendas. Secondly, Jennifer’s account relies upon a subordinate self-representation to highlight the inadequacies of healthcare provision; that although Jennifer is ‘African’, ‘even’ she knows that this constitutes a dangerous practice. Jennifer’s move to denigrate herself to prove a point is revealing and perhaps reflects a wider strategy of representing oneself as subordinate and therefore a victim to a paternalistic system. Thirdly, accusing detention staff of essentially committing infanticide was to effectively frame detained women as helpless and subjugated.

Participants, like Khanara above, reported punitive measures being used against detainees who were deemed noncompliant such as confining ‘disruptive’ individuals in an isolation unit. Mary explained that shortly after being detained she had begun to feel unwell and reported this to detention staff. Fearing that she might have tuberculosis, staff placed Mary in quarantine within the

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<sup>19</sup> While Jennifer appears to believe that anti-malarials are unsafe for pregnant women, the British National Formulary 68 (2014) advises that there are cases where medication can be safely administered in certain cases.

detention centre. It was eventually conceded that Mary had not contracted the disease and she was retransferred to the main detention centre, but not before she had been kept in solitary confinement in a small room for three months;

“I was confined. You were surrounded by walls and you just open the window just to see, you just hear noises far away. The only people you see is maybe the nurses and maybe the priest and that kind of stuff. When my clothes used to get dirty they would take them and wash them.” Mary

The use of quarantine in Mary’s experience arguably strengthened the UKBA’s biopolitical justification to detain her, emanating traditional paternalistic endeavours to protect the nation from disease (Foucault and Ewald, 2003). Authors comment that the body is political as it is inscribed with power (Fassin and D’Halluin, 2005), which is an astute observation of how Mary described her experience and the profound price she felt she paid through her health and wellbeing<sup>20</sup>. While all participants were confined by being detained in Yarl’s Wood, Mary’s solitary confinement was particularly acute by comparison. As discussed in a previous section, Mary’s representation of self as the ‘most deserving’ candidate, was further augmented by the severity of her isolation.

Participants claimed that physical force was most frequently used during attempted deportations and this was critical in how they conveyed their vulnerability. Khanara described an account of being taken with her mother onto a plane consigned to deport them;

“They keep on insisting “we need to take your phone” and I had like my phone like this you know? [shows a tight fist grip over her mobile phone] and they like open my fingers [begins to pry open each of her fingers at a time, her knuckles white with the force of her grip] one by one like that and it was like this man here [indicates to her right] and this woman here [indicate to her left] like one of them like holding my arm, my other arm and the other one was trying to like open my fingers and then they got my phone [...] I just screamed and my mum thought I don’t know, ‘cos that time I was like bleeding my nose, I’d been so much in stress so much. I don’t know I was so stressed, I was just so afraid, my nose was bleeding. I was vomiting, I was not feeling my leg.” Khanara

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<sup>20</sup> I return to explore this in Chapter Seven.

Khanara's narrative relies upon a description of her embodied experience to convey a sense of powerlessness and distress; her 'leaky and messy' body betraying the disruption to her internal and external world which was so extreme that she was unable to regulate it (Longhurst, 2004). This echoes a politics of fluidity/solidity and irrationality/rationality which compounds gendered stereotypes of women's bodies as incapable of securing bodily boundaries (McDowell, 1993). Whilst this literature underscores the existence of gendered stereotyping and alludes to the limitations of these, Khanara's deliberate evocation of her embodied experience of violence suggests a strategic renegotiation of power to construct herself as a victim by conceptualising detention staff as punitive. This offers a new meaning to Longhurst's (2004: 3) call to find new frameworks that capture the multiple, diverse and evolving ways that bodies are formed and respond to power-imbued space. Kea and Roberts-Holmes (2013) discuss how the construction of victim identities can rely upon 'evidence' from the body and cite an evocative empirical example of a woman undergoing 'deinfibulation' by force at the hands of her husband's relatives. Crucially, both Kea and Roberts-Holmes' and Khanara's examples rely upon visceral descriptions and the audience's response to these in order to (co)construct the desired victim identity.

Noreen's production of a victim identity was augmented by her account of being subjected to two episodes of sexual assault by a male healthcare worker whilst in Yarl's Wood;

"After I didn't tell anyone, I just keep quiet. [...] I just lay down on my bed, smoking, smoking, smoking not going anywhere. [...] I told my friend when I was going in healthcare I had sexual assault with that man and he forced me to see his penis and I said my mind is very tired. I had vomiting at that time, they put me in healthcare, they give me tablets, sleeping tablets and he came again and said 'I like you so much, you can touch my penis'." Noreen

Noreen's portrayal of herself as a victim was reliant upon cumulative accounts of exploitation; the sexual assault in detention echoing her earlier accounts of domestic violence by her ex-husband. Noreen's solicitor was pursuing a legal case against the UKBA but at the time of fieldwork this remained inconclusive. She had, with Noreen's permission, taken her story to the media;

"My solicitor he put in newspaper, in Observer newspaper [...] he said this is too much, I heard you are inside and I will take you out. [...] After that my solicitor, he was coming there because I was vomiting, I was vomiting, I had loose motions because when I go too much stress my bowels start problems [...] he said "you have this problem how many times?" and when he see

my healthcare record and he said “we will take your application because we fight with you, we fight them because you are too much sick and they know everything because they see the file”.” Noreen

This second extract highlights that not only did Noreen have some awareness of broader public and media debate about the detention of vulnerable individuals<sup>21</sup>, she herself had featured in a broadsheet article about her experiences. Noreen’s account also speaks to the discussion above about how visceral, embodied accounts were used to convey the extent of her victimisation. Indeed, it appears that her physical symptoms and health record had convinced her solicitor to take, what appear to be unusual, steps to secure her release from detention. In this way, the narrative that Noreen offered me was one that to some extent reflected her previous experiences of what constituted a persuasive (and successful) victim identity.

Whilst Amelia’s account of Yarl’s Wood was the most positive of all participants, it spoke to her broader experience of persecution in Uganda;

“When I was received at the Reception at Yarl’s Wood, I thought maybe this was a bit nice compared to the police station and then I was taken to a unit where you have to be in your own room, then the next day you are given an induction [...] now that I had gotten someone who really showed that she cared [...] we are in the same boat, so you are also gay, so we shared our problems [...] so then life actually became better although we were confined in those walls, at least it was better.” Amelia

Amelia’s experience of the regulated, contained detention environment had increased her feelings of safety, amplifying her persecution and imprisonment in squalid conditions in Uganda. Amelia’s narrative indicated an articulacy in a certain discourse of persecution on the grounds of sexuality which added weight to her representation as someone who was deserving of support from the UK government. This relied upon the perceived threat of persecution, her representation of Uganda as an unsafe place and the Ugandan government as corrupt and untrustworthy. Once again this echoes

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<sup>21</sup> More recent allegations made in the press have highlighted widespread and on-going inappropriate sexual contact and intimidation between inmates and staff at Yarl’s Wood.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/sep/21/sexual-abuse-yarls-wood-immigration>

Kea and Robert-Holmes (2013) observations that the construction of victim identities amongst Gambia women in their study relied upon representations of the home country as unsafe.

Amelia's construction of this particular subjectivity was reinforced through her fluency in a legal discourse on which her asylum claim had come to rely, and efforts to represent herself as an educated, openminded individual of social standing who no longer had a place in what she perceived a more backward Ugandan society. Not unlike Bella, Amelia's narrative was dominated by the legal details of her case and an awareness of cultural nuance on her application. Amelia explained how she had met her partner, another Ugandan woman, whilst they were both detained in Yarl's Wood. Unbeknown to the couple, another Ugandan woman who was detained with them had observed their relationship and after being deported to Uganda, had sold the story to a Ugandan newspaper. Amelia described how she was 'outed' to her family when her relationship became national knowledge;

"My Dad called me and was like "I am so sorry but you are no longer my daughter. I cannot put up with all this accusations that is directed to me" because my family has a reputation [...] it really had a bad effect on them. Maybe if the newspaper had not published it, maybe if I had been deported, you never know, maybe I would have denied everything, maybe I would have relocated, but now it is so horrible because the way I came to know about it, what happens in Uganda they do newspapers review every morning so when they were doing newspaper reviews over the radio, of course this is something that attracted attention. Even people who had not seen the newspaper heard about it and rushed to buy the newspaper, they told me that newspaper sold like hot cakes because everyone wanted to read." Amelia

Amelia's account is revealing of how she felt Yarl's Wood played a role in magnifying her persecution in Uganda. It also highlights the depth of Amelia's understanding about the legal framing of her identity as a persecuted individual on the grounds of sexuality and her acknowledgement of the other possible outcomes had the circumstances been different. Ultimately, Amelia constructed a convincing scenario which, by suggesting there was no other options for her but to remain and emphasising the public nature of her predicament, was to add weight to her victim identity. Revealingly, however, Amelia's identity as a lesbian on which her asylum claim relied, was one she kept hidden from her immediate Catholic community as she feared their denouncement of her and withdrawal of support.

Proponents represent immigration detention as a punitive measure to remove and contain 'dangerous' and 'bogus' individuals, compounding stereotypes of untrustworthiness and 'distorters of truth' which are understood to arise from the inability of migrants to prove genuine need (Malloch and Stanley, 2005; Griffiths, 2012). Similarly to accounts of the asylum system, all participants used their narratives of Yarl's Wood to illustrate how the 'culture of disbelief' continued to prevail particularly through their relations with staff;

"If you are doing the roll count and they come in and you say "Pru?" and I say "yeah okay, I'm around", and you're not satisfied that I'm the one who has said "I'm around", you want to see me physically? I'm there and you see somebody is in the shower but you insist, you insist that you want to see me physically? That's not proper." Pru

Pru felt that her loss of autonomy was epitomised by being denied the right to answer for herself and account for her presence. This extract also speaks of her protest against being objectified and by suggesting this treatment is 'not proper', Pru is perhaps speaking of her dignity being denied, rendering her a body to be counted (Agamben, 1998). This is not however to suggest that participants were wholly rendered bare life during detention, indeed there were anecdotal accounts of women engaging in activities such as prayer vigils and hunger strikes whilst in detention as a form of resistance. This is corroborated by the charity workers interviewed and the wider literature (Bailey 2009, McGregor 2012, Antonsich 2013). Laura for example described how her room in Yarl's Wood became a 'church' where women came to pray;

"My room was like a church because women were coming in throughout the night we were praying, were not sleeping we were spending our nights praying. Maybe the officers were annoyed a little because we were disturbing them, that's what I participated in most is praying, all night." Laura

In this way Laura demonstrated an act of peaceful resistance which contested the one-dimensional identity of victim, speaking once again to her 'victim/fighter' identity discussed earlier in the chapter. This echoes work by McGregor (2012: 236) who has observed that detention centres can act as 'spaces of religious revival' where for individuals detained in UK IRCs, "Christianity and the Bible provided bodily, narrative and performative ways of coping with, and countering the fraught 'affective atmosphere'" within these spaces.

This section has highlighted how participants' accounts of Yarl's Wood were used to further constructions of themselves as 'deserving' candidates. This was achieved through a number of narrative strategies, including a reporting of punitive and infantilising treatment by detention staff. This was instrumental in participants' representations as individuals who had fled persecution only to be subjected to alternative hegemonic oppression. Paradoxically, adopting victim subjectivities was to (re)claim a passive and submissive role, further reinforced by the active pursuit of protection which welcomed the paternalistic attention of the state. This section has also underscored the influence of external discourse on the women's narratives, from circulating ideas about the asylum system within migrant communities, popular media representations of asylum seekers and active use of the media, a legalised immigration discourse and the 'culture of disbelief'. A further narrative strategy employed was the use of visceral, embodied accounts to convey experiences of abuse and ill-treatment which were significant in reinforcing 'deserving' subjectivities.

#### 4.4 Chapter conclusions: Constructing 'deserving' subjectivities

This chapter has considered participants' 'narratives of precarious beginnings' through a close engagement with three key geographical sites; narratives of flight and arrival, the asylum process, and Yarl's Wood. A critical enquiry of these three sites has revealed that participants utilised particular narrative strategies to construct 'deserving' as opposed to 'undeserving' subjectivities which above all legitimated their right to remain in the UK.

The first strategy was the (re)claiming of victim identities. Anderson (2008: 2) observes that discourses on migration are grounded in a 'goodie/baddie paradigm' which tends to represent migrants, particularly 'illegal immigrants', as either 'villains' or 'victims'. This, she argues, is problematic, not only because it relies upon an 'anti-political' approach which relinquishes nation states from their responsibility to protect 'vulnerable' people, but because it obscures the nuanced nature of real-life experiences of migration. Other critics note that scholars, politicians and charities writing in support of migrants play a key role in perpetuating homogenous, one-dimensional, victim-like representations of forced migrants whilst simultaneously stifling their voices. It is asserted by others that forced migrants vie to have their voices heard, seeking to challenge these passive stereotypes and seek autonomy. The charitable sector is also seen as complicit in perpetuating perceptions of forced migrants as individuals in desperate need of humanitarian protection.

Gayatri Spivak (1995) has coined the term 'strategic essentialism', which refers to the ways in which subordinate or marginalised social groups may strategically reclaim an essentialised identity to

further a particular end. “Conscious and purposive imitation is in effect a strategic counterdiscourse; it creates a space in which refugee women reclaim their self and agency, as only they know that they are using essentialism as a strategy” (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2013: 39-40). While some authors, like Hajdukowski-Ahmed (2008; 2013) argue that the adoption of strategic essentialism serves to perpetuate disempowerment through silencing narratives of resilience and strength, others argue for a more nuanced perspective. In their work with Gambian asylum-seeker women, Kea and Roberts-Holmes (2013: 100) endorse a different way of viewing agency; one that is removed from “liberal, reductionist preoccupations with resistance and passivity”. They contend that the women in their study actively sought and made use of victim identities, adding weight to their narratives as worthy and deserving of state protection (in this case from returning to face Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)). This, they argue, fundamentally disrupted the distinction between victims and agents.

Whilst a major strategy employed by most participants in this study was the active reclaiming of victim identities, this chapter has offered a more nuanced perspective which augments the work of these other authors. It has been suggested that rather than rejecting victim identities, participants embraced them. This was not however straightforward as not only were the victim identities assumed multifarious, they were juxtaposed against other complex, contrastive identities such as the ‘victim/fighter’, ‘victim/campaigner of human rights’, ‘victim/payer of tax’, ‘victim/desirable professional’ and ‘victim of trafficking/protective mother’. This echoes research by Åkerström et al (2011: 103) who in their study with ‘victims of violence’, observed a delicate balancing of conflicting identities which did not reject the victim identity but “subtly or implicitly modified it”, discursively positioning themselves through the combining of “seemingly mismatched identities”. In the case of this study, participants' portrayals of themselves as victims alongside other ‘seemingly mismatched’ but desirable representations of self were mutually reinforcing and effective in how they represented themselves as ‘deserving’ of asylum.

Another narrative strategy employed by participants was a discourse of ‘not knowing’ when dealing with the asylum system. This was critical in denying a certain asylum literacy, which participants used to absolve themselves from responsibility and justify their decisions not to seek asylum soon after arrival. This strategy was instrumental in the construction of individuals who were ‘undeserving’ of being detained and being subjected to punitive measures. Claims of ‘not knowing’ were juxtaposed once again against accounts which suggested many women became highly literate not just in an ‘asylum dialect’ but in other key discourses as propagated by different sources. This

included ideas about the asylum system which circulated within migrant communities such as trafficking and gender persecution, representations of asylum seekers in popular culture and the media, and a legalised immigration discourse. Indeed, some participants' familiarity and insights with these discourses was such that they had made active use of these to further their own positions i.e. Noreen featuring in a British broadsheet newspaper. This highlights how participants' literacy and shrewdness grew over their time in the UK, not least from their time spent in Yarl's Wood and encounters with the asylum system.

All the narrative strategies employed by participants relied upon an audience in their (co)constructions of selves as 'deserving', but this remained most acutely so when evoking visceral, embodied accounts. It has been acknowledged that the construction of victim identities rely in part upon this being witnessed by an audience, particularly when 'evidence' is offered (Kea and Roberts-Holmes, 2013). These embodied accounts were particularly powerful therefore in conveying experiences of abuse and ill-treatment and producing victim identities. Briggs (2003: 246, cited in Signona 2014) asserts that interviews are "saturated by images of the social dynamics of the interview itself, projections of the social context in which it takes place, the roles and power dynamics in the interviewer and respondent, and their respective agendas". Indeed, Bourdieu (1994) warns against the 'biographical illusion' which takes interview data as a "stable set of social facts that have an objective existence independent of the linguistic and contextual settings in which they are expressed" (Briggs, 2003: 247, cited in Signona 2014). Research encounters are therefore situated and mediated, where any question or response is contextually grounded and jointly constructed (Sigona, 2014: 378). This was most poignantly exemplified in the encounter with Jana at the Women's Centre where the currents of power were by no means straightforward.

Despite the diversity of women included in this study across axes of difference, a key contribution of this chapter has been to draw out the commonalities that emerged from their stories and highlight shared experiences. A key commonality has been the strategic use of participants' narratives to construct 'deserving' subjectivities. This mutual pursuit can be understood therefore as a key form of collectivisation that was rooted in their shared experiences as migrant women who had been detained in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre. This chapter has therefore drawn out the commonalities that emerged from the women's stories by drawing on their personal representations as 'deserving' candidates. This speaks to critical thought about 'deportability' as a particular political subjectivity shared by 'deportable' individuals (De Genova 2002; De Genova & Peutz 2010; McGregor, 2012) . This suggests that participants' constructions as 'deserving' might be

conceived of as a direct negotiation of, response to, and resistance against their collective deportable status.

Having unpacked the initial stages of respondents' narratives, I turn in the next chapter to examine their lives beyond release from detention. While the encounters with the asylum system detailed here might be perceived as a consequence of the UK's broader domopolitical agenda, the next chapter unpacks this in more depth and draws out the significance of home. This is achieved by a close examination of participants' experiences with the physical and material homes that they encountered. These I suggest were largely defined by UK immigration policies of which dispersal remained a pivotal feature and through which broader state interventions were actualised.

This chapter examines respondents' experiences of the material home and explores how negotiations with these places were embroiled with real and imagined state interventions, framed within ideas of (in)security and porosity. In order to appreciate the true intersectionality of 'home', a broad lens is adopted which is grounded within a critical geographical interpretation. This views home as consisting of "imagination, routinized everyday practices, relationship networks, and representation imbued with personal and social meaning, cultural ideals, and values" (Butcher, 2010: 24-25). For migrants, home is multiple and has personal, cultural, emotional and symbolic significance (Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Blunt, 2007). Moreover as Brickell's (2012a, 2012b) geopolitical observations attest, home is a site of poly-scalar politics. She notes the "political contours of power flowing through the home" and asserts that "access or denial to home is dictated by larger political realities, rendering its recesses the 'sites for history's most intricate invasions' (Bhabha, 1994: 13)" (Brickell, 2012b: 229). Here I explore how the home was experienced as a site of political contestation given respondents' positionalities as '(ex-detained) migrant women' and how these identities were performed, imagined and negotiated within and in relation to these spaces.

While critical interpretations move beyond a potentially narrow framing of home as an ostensibly material site, physical dwellings and places of shelter remained of primary concern for all participants. This is not surprising given the universal consensus that housing is a prerequisite for survival and undergirds our hierarchy of need (Maslow et al., 1970; Phillimore and Goodson, 2008). The first half of this chapter examines the significance of housing and places of dwelling, identifying four broad categories. Firstly, National Asylum Support Service (NASS) funded accommodation which included hostels, bed and breakfast (B&B), and shared homes; secondly, the homes of friends, family and acquaintances; thirdly, privately-rented, local authority (LA) and charity funded housing; and finally, less conventional and informal dwellings such as bus stops, squats, buses, and night shelters. Crucially, these accounts were framed within a discourse of (in)security; not only were encounters with home motivated by the pursuit of security, these negotiations were equally responsible for proliferating insecurity in different ways. The second half builds on this by unpacking how the material and performative geographies of home were experienced as porous. I suggest that both (in)security and porosity were instrumental in perpetuating a general narrative of precarity beyond release from detention, furthering an understanding of home as a site of geopolitical negotiations and contestation.

Before continuing it is important to qualify the terminology used throughout this chapter. Given the deliberately expansive interpretation of home, I use the term 'home' loosely. While home is recognised as having political, material, imagined, emotional, visual and sensory dimensions it is also remains subjective, multiscalar, multiple, real or imagined (Butcher, 2010). Given the context of this research, home remains inseparable from concepts of transnationalism, belonging and citizenship. Other terms such as dwelling, homespace, accommodation and housing are also used to describe the physical or material 'home'.

### 5.1 *(In)secure spaces of home*

"It's a mixed feeling. You've been released from that place but it doesn't mean that you are safe. It could still happen to you next day and you feel insecure." Berdour

While migrants' experiences of past trauma, displacement and mobility propagates insecurity, proponents concur that this insecurity endures beyond arrival to the host country due to a range of factors (Silove et al., 1997). Beyond key threats of being (re)detained and removed from the country, insecurity was for participants fuelled by the uncertainty and impermanence of living arrangements. Proponents concur that for migrants, housing remains uncertain and while this is most true upon arrival it can take years until more permanent and stable accommodation is secured (Dwyer and Brown, 2008). The uncertainty of housing for migrants has a lot to with the increasingly stringent asylum legislation over the past two decade which has seen the housing rights of asylum-seekers diminished (Dwyer, 2005) [See Appendix 5 for more details on this legislation]. Phillips (2006) observes that for new forced migrant arrivals, frequent moves of accommodation are common because their entitlement to support remains undetermined. This depends on the point at which individuals seek asylum as discussed in the previous chapter. Repeated and unexpected periods of detention and relocation at varying stages of the asylum process disrupted attachments to place driving respondents to move to new and unfamiliar dwellings, severing support networks and forcing encounters with distant and potentially hostile communities. This infused the everyday with precarity which was experienced as being unwanted and undervalued by society. 'Making home' is therefore problematic and may leave migrants vulnerable to racism, exploitation, social exclusion and fuel uncertainty about the future (Buck, 2001; Wilson, 2001; Netto, 2006; 2011). Cumulatively these factors are also erosive for health and wellbeing (Carter and El-Hassan, 2003), something I return to in Chapter Seven.

In the next four sub-sections I examine the broad types of accommodation respondents encountered respectively, unpacking the significance of (in)security. Not all had experienced every kind of accommodation so not each section is relevant to the whole sample.

#### *5.1.1 NASS accommodation*

“You are not given any choice, you’re just given at random [...] I went there, it was really very hard time. The place I was put in was just in an isolated place, okay it was shared accommodation but people were not in the house at that time when I came in and it was an old city, very old with factories. They were potteries, so the place was just in isolation near the old potteries, factories something and every time I looked out and said “oh!”, all closed down and very old. There was no life [...] it was cold, it was still winter, all these hardships in winter, I said “oh, god I’m going to die” [...] imagine you are like that, you are put in a room, what are you going to do? You don’t have clothes, someone have given you accommodation, that same thin, thin, thin duvet, you know the thin ones? And you know the poor quality of the duvet covers everything being provide is poor quality, the saucepans today to cook, tomorrow they are rusty, are you going to use those rusty saucepans, can you use them? Obviously you can’t use them.” Ella

Like Ella, over two thirds of participants had lived in NASS accommodation if not at the time of fieldwork then at some point during their time in the UK. Dwyer and Brown (2008: 206) outline that “[f]ollowing an induction period spent in emergency accommodation, NASS permits clients to choose one of two support options; accommodation and subsistence or subsistence only. For those who require housing, eligibility is conditional on migrants accepting compulsory, no choice, ‘dispersal’ to a specified location across the UK”. The tiering of housing entitlements are summarised in Table 3 below. I discuss the subsistence later on in this chapter.

Dispersal has been disparaged as social and psychological exclusion which, along with deportation and detention, has become a ‘normal’ and ‘essential’ weapon within UK immigration management (Bloch and Schuster, 2005). Given the multifarious points of entry to the asylum system, some women faced dispersal soon after arrival whilst others were uprooted from established homes built over many years. Consequently this also saw participants detained before dispersal or indeed after relocation once asylum claims had been exhausted [See Appendix 6 for a diagram of the UK asylum system]. Repeated and unexpected periods of detention and other bureaucratic reasons sometimes demanded frequent relocation, and some respondents had experienced multiple NASS

accommodations. This disrupted attachments to place through the resettlement in new and unfamiliar dwellings and communities, severing existing support networks and causing the displacement of material items. This illustrates how the unpredictability of the asylum system was reflected in encounters with housing, contributing to everyday precarity.

*Table 5.1: Forced migrants and the tiering of housing entitlements. Adapted from Dwyer and Brown (2008)*

	Right to remain	Housing related rights	Conditioning factors	Right to work
Refugee (whose claim for asylum has been accepted)	Temporary – 5 years in the first instance	Can join local authority waiting lists Access to housing benefit Can seek support as a homeless person	Temporary right to remain limits options for home occupation	Yes
Humanitarian protection/discretionary leave (granted to those UKBA recognises would be in danger if returned to country of origin)	Temporary – up to 3 years (removable/renewable)	Can join local authority waiting lists Access to housing benefit Can seek support as a homeless person	Temporary right to remain limits options of home occupation	Yes
Asylum seeker (those making a claim for refugee status)	For length of claim	NASS accommodation	Must be destitute No choice dispersal	No
Failed asylum seeker (those whose claim for refugee status has been refused)	No right to remain	None or in certain circumstances Section 4 'hardcase' support	Must be destitute Acceptable (potentially) of secondary dispersal across UK Signing a repatriation document Performance of specified community activities	No

Dispersal destinations were often in northern UK cities that were unfamiliar and located away from existing support networks<sup>22</sup> (Stewart, 2012). Respondents had been dispersed to Doncaster, Nottingham, Stoke-on-Trent and Manchester. Before dispersal most respondents were

<sup>22</sup> Not all applicants were considered eligible for support from the UKBA, as Mary, Jennifer and Pru were released from detention without any support. As Table 5.1 indicates, if someone had an existing support network or accommodation they were not considered destitute. This was often illogical as upon release from detention anyone with asylum-seeker status was prohibited from working and was therefore unable to maintain payments, leading to evictions and homelessness. Remaining wholly dependent on family or friends was also considered unacceptable by respondents.

accommodated temporarily in emergency accommodation such as hostels (i.e. Barry House in Croydon<sup>23</sup>) or in B&Bs<sup>24</sup> (Dwyer and Brown, 2008). Temporary accommodation was variably located, sometimes requiring multiple transportations by van or minibus between different UK cities and over long distances. These accommodations could be cramped and inhospitable, with several women sleeping in close proximity in shared rooms.

“After detention I was moved to Cardiff [...] they put me in hotel for one month. I was on top of the place like, two, four, six in a room, six women in a room, different nationality, there was Nigeria, Cameroon, Chinese, a girl from Uganda, there was a girl from Bangladesh, two from Bangladesh you know people were talking, you can’t sleep. I was so stressed.” Tulisa

The experience of cramped, unhomey and transient spaces was often disturbing. For others who had just entered the UK, sometimes reeling from traumatic events in their country of origin or flight, these spaces were not conducive to healing indeed were seen to aggravate the effect of trauma, dislocation and separation (Witteborn, 2011).

The majority were dispersed, but three participants remained in London. Whilst unclear why this minority were able to resist mandatory dispersal it appears that at the time the initial asylum application was made two had been minors or a child had been involved in their claim. Unusually, Jana had been supported by a women’s charity to appeal against dispersal and won the right to remain in London and received NASS support<sup>25</sup>. After being granted refugee status she had moved to alternative housing, as discussed later. The key difference between participants’ experience of different UK cities was those who were dispersed usually had to start building a support network from scratch while those who remained in London were usually, though not always, better supported from the outset.

NASS accommodation, where most participants lived and where some fieldwork was conducted, was principally located on the periphery of urban communities, in poor or deprived areas where crime rates were reportedly high and where women often felt unsafe. Ella distinguished between the

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<sup>23</sup> Barry House, a 140-bed hostel for asylum-seekers, was where several participants were temporarily housed before being dispersed.

<sup>24</sup> No participant was living in temporary accommodation at the time of their interview.

<sup>25</sup> Jana argued that she would be unable to find the same ‘specialist’ support if dispersed away from the women’s centre. Asylum Support adjudicators ruled that NASS had to demonstrate that the same services would be available in the dispersal region, which they were unable to do.

many cities in which she had lived, identifying some as less welcoming and more inclined towards racism than others. The cities in which she had lived independently and by choice were perceived more favourably than those to which she had been dispersed. In the latter, Ella had experienced racism and hostility.

“It’s discrimination, well its racism. [...] It’s only ten years when they started mixing with other people and those were the Pakistanis who were taken there ten years back. Right now ‘cos there was a demonstration they didn’t want the asylum-seekers.” Ella

Research suggests that dispersal regions may be unwelcoming to foreign visitors, undermining social integration and disrupting the investment and belonging of migrants obliged to live in areas which feel equally resentful of being forced to accept newcomers (Hubbard, 2005). The UKBA holds contracts with a number of private companies who provide accommodation across the UK (Stewart, 2012; Refugee Council, 2013). While the type of buildings used for NASS accommodation varied they are often characteristically large with multiple floors and rooms. The five buildings I visited during fieldwork were predominantly dark, had poorly maintained communal facilities and were located near busy roads or in deprived neighbourhoods associated with high crime rates; characteristics which respondents felt were stigmatising and where they felt unsafe. A common concern was geographical distance from local facilities and means of support, exacerbated by having limited funds to pay for travel. These concerns were reiterated by the charity workers interviewed who described the isolation and multiple deprivation that many women faced as a result of their locations. As well as being dispersed to a remote and undesirable location, Ella’s quote at the beginning of the section highlights a number of commonly reported issues with NASS accommodation including inhospitable homespaces resulting from a lack of or provision of poor quality material items, social isolation and overcrowding.

“That’s why when you are far away it’s like you are, they throw you, tell you to go commit suicide because you cannot go anywhere. Like now if you don’t have transport there’s nowhere I can go, this is not like in the city where I can say, ok I can go to church so I can sit down and pray. I cannot walk around or just go here, no not even the park, you cannot say I’ll sit the park to go meet people, to see people, to ease my mind. If you have no transport how can I even function?” Bella

Bella highlights problems associated with relocation to remote suburban areas without local facilities or green space, exacerbated by unaffordable travel costs and causing social exclusion.

Narratives of NASS accommodation highlighted the challenges of living in close proximity with people from different cultures, and lack of personal space, privacy and dignity. Some respondents felt unsafe because of antisocial behaviour such as drug abuse or sharing bedrooms with mentally unwell roommates;

“They give me sharing house, sharing one room with two person. It was not nice. She was also, my sharing person she was mad and she just take an iron [...] she was ironing and I was asleep and she was ironing my body.” Haben

A minority reported camaraderie with other residents but this was unusual as the majority spoke of isolation which caused emotional distress and highlighted separation from family and loved ones. A combination of shared occupancy with strangers and NASS regulations undermined the performance of some homemaking activities which might have helped increase the homeliness of these dwellings. An example of this was inviting guests;

“You cannot invite people to your home because it’s a shared accommodation, you know it’s a common room the living room it’s for six people [...] some people will want to be their own way, someone might want to be in her towel, somebody wakes up and is in their towel with cup of tea, you’d have loved a friend to come and visit.” Ella

Hospitality is a key custom culturally imbricated with the home (van der Horst, 2004). The restrictions preventing Ella from inviting visitors therefore denied her the opportunity to use the shared space in such a way that would undergo its transformation from a dwelling to a ‘home’ with deeper cultural meaning. This was at odds with her comfortable, independent lifestyle prior to detention and highlighted her change in status and social positioning. For others living in NASS properties the type, quality and location of accommodation infused their lived experiences, ‘speaking for’ the state as a reminder of their subordinate positionalities.

“There was a time last year when our smoke alarm was faulty [...] it would go off at any time of night. It went off at around eight, I went down and switched it off, reset it. It would go off every 30 minutes, people became tired and left it [...] And I am on the top [*third floor*] so I

have go down, I wanted to scream my head off but why am I the only one in the house? Why cannot people come and reset the thing? But even if I shout no-one is going to answer so I had to put in my headphones and cover myself with pillows and in the morning I went to do my voluntary work. I left when it was running off [...] I came back in the evening and it was still going off. I sat down and cried. This is really hell.” Amelia

Beyond the material construction of this unhomely homespace, Amelia highlights a key issue of responsibility; of residents’ and those responsible for maintaining the building. The apathy of other residents suggests a lack of commitment to and investment in their shared living space which is understandable perhaps given the temporary and uncertain nature of their stay and the already poor living conditions. This abnegation might be seen to further undermine a communal sense of belonging, manifesting indifference and fuelling generalised insecurity. Amelia also highlights a common issue of poorly maintained communal facilities by NASS contracted landlords or private companies. The reporting of malfunctioning facilities such as toilets, utilities, door locks and intercoms which undermined security was common, indeed in Amelia’s house of nine bedrooms, two of the four bathrooms were inoperative.

“You go in the kitchen and you feel the appetite has gone before you even start cooking your food. The bathrooms and toilets, oh boy, they are so filthy, I have to go with my bleach before I use a toilet or the bathroom. I think we are supposed to have someone to clean the communal areas, but that man will come and sit in his car and not bother to enter into the house and the house will spend like two months without being cleaned. The bathrooms will get blocked, you report and it is like no one bothers.” Amelia

Experiences like Amelia’s were not unusual and are reiterated by research which highlights glaring shortcomings in the provision of NASS accommodation (Craig et al., 2004; Dwyer, 2005; Dwyer and Brown, 2008). Stansfield (2001) notes that private companies contracted by NASS to provide housing to asylum-seekers often lack the expertise, experience or staff of housing providers such as housing associations and LAs. Far from places of refuge, these properties may become sites where generalised feelings of powerlessness are proliferated.

There was a noticeable improvement in the accommodation that participants with children or husbands had in comparison to single applicants<sup>26</sup>. Unusually, Rupinder lived in a pleasant self-contained flat with her husband. This dwelling mitigated Rupinder's poor physical health, transformed into a contained and comfortable therapeutic landscape where her husband was able to look after her and administer medication (Gesler, 1992; 1996; Kearns and Gesler, 1998). A source of distress however was Rupinder's inability to conceive and therefore care for a child within the home. This illustrates home as a multi-layered landscape of care within which the individual has the potential to be reworked through daily practices of care-giving, a potential which might not be realised (Dyck, 2005; Dyck et al., 2005; Dyck and Dossa, 2007). This homespace also enabled her to engage in homemaking activities such as cooking traditional food which offered some solace from the uncertainty and fear of removal and detention. During fieldwork Rupinder and her husband cooked a feast of traditional food when I visited with their support worker, Theresa, who helped translate. As we ate, we spoke about the food;

Theresa: "I asked if it's important that they eat Pakistani food. She says daily they eat chapatti. I asked her if she thinks of Pakistan when she eats it and she says yes."

Rupinder: "So many times I am crying because my mum gave me these things, my mum every day made them."

Menah: "Well it's very special that you've made it for us, very special."

Rupinder: "My mum liked very much saag, [*points to the saag dish*] its potato, you eat chapatti with it."

This exchange highlights the significance of food in evoking memories of a childhood home while maintaining safe physical distance from her family in Pakistan given their rejection and threats to end her life. Cooking particular dishes helped maintain Rupinder's gendered, cultural identity and helped build her self-efficacy. Indeed Rupinder expressed pride at being able to reproduce traditional food and 'create home' regardless of environment, just so long as she could find the right ingredients. This afforded a particular freedom which had been noticeably lacking in detention and which she felt was the worst aspect of her incarceration. The following is a research diary extract in which I reflect on Theresa's visits to see Rupinder and her husband in detention;

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<sup>26</sup> While married applicants were jointly accommodated, participants who had formed relationships since their arrival had unanimously been prevented from living with their partners in NASS accommodation.

On one visit, Rupinder and her husband had spent their scant money on food like chips to offer Theresa during her visit, only to be told by officers that food purchased outside the visiting room was prohibited inside the room. The couple then bought other food from a vending machine inside the visiting room including bags of crisps to ensure they had something to offer Theresa. This example conveys the couples' attempts to create a homespace of sorts within unhomey detention centre and the cultural importance of food; something that was very apparent during our visit to the couple's home<sup>27</sup>. Theresa told me about the couples' other attempts to create homely space within their NASS accommodation such as laying down their wedding bed sheets and I noticed the selective placing of bowls of sweets around the flat<sup>28</sup>. Research diary, 10 Oct 2012

There is consensus that food conveys a great deal about attachment to place as it "can help people feel at home, it can prompt them to miss home, and it can be a bridge to a new home" (Longhurst et al., 2009: 333), with particular poignancy for migrants (Kershen, 2002; Ashley et al, 2004). It was clear through Theresa's interaction with Rupinder and my own, that ideological representations of home were inextricable from the welcoming of visitors and sharing food. However, the couple's fear of being targeted by the Pakistani diaspora for their 'love marriage' undermined their readiness to trust others and welcome them into their home. The absence of an established social network destabilised the potential that their comfortable NASS property offered to make a 'real home', serving instead as a space to which they retreated from perceived ostracisation and created security.

Haben also lived in a well-furnished, comfortable room in a shared house where she felt safe. She had been moved there from wholly inappropriate housing with her young baby after, as detailed above, she was attacked in the night by her roommate. While Haben and Rupinder's accounts highlight that NASS accommodation can both perpetuate and mitigate insecurity, these variable experiences were unusual as in most cases these spaces was generally negative and experienced as insecure.

### *5.1.2 Living with friends and family*

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<sup>27</sup> This speaks to Moran's (2013: 339) work on prison waiting rooms as a liminal "space of betweenness where a metaphorical threshold crossing takes place between outside and inside".

<sup>28</sup> Dennis and Warin (2010) speak of the importance of certain food in 'sweetening of relations' and 'honeying of tongues' which remains integral to Iranian codes of conduct in the home.

“Last time I stayed with one of my friends, she called me to come, she said “come Tulisa, come and live with me in Whitechapel”. One day she just chucked me out, packed my things, I even left some things there. I just picked the few ones I can pick, I have to call one of my friends from church, she said to me “come, stay here don’t worry life is like that everything will be fine”.” Tulisa

D’Addario et al (2007) highlight the key role of social capital in migrants’ housing trajectories. Indeed, the most common form of accommodation reported by all but four participants was living with friends, family and/or acquaintances. This constituted an astonishing network of dwellings across the country which was utilised at different stages of the migratory process. At the time of fieldwork only four participants were living with family or friends, but others had lived in the homes of friends, family and/or acquaintances when they first arrived in the UK; before they had become established or before they sought asylum. Support with accommodation at this early stage was an essential safety net which kept women off the streets and offered security until other options were resolved. This constituted ‘hidden homelessness’ through a reliance on shared accommodation, sofa-surfing and social contacts for temporary and precarious housing (Preston et al., 2009). Other participants lived with others later; after release from detention or when refusal by the UKBA left them homeless and destitute. Living with others was usually a temporary solution but for others, particularly those living with family, these arrangements were longer-term and their residence established. In the main, however, living with others was only short-term and consequently some participants moved frequently between different dwellings. As Tulisa’s quote above suggests, it was not uncommon for women to be evicted without warning and this potential manifested insecurity.

Jennifer’s experience was an unusual and positive example of informal assistance. After seeking asylum she was considered ineligible for support by the UKBA despite being destitute and in the absence of any other shelter was taken to a London squat by a charity volunteer. Jennifer lived in the squat for a number of years and when all occupants were eventually evicted a British woman with whom Jennifer had been living bought a property and welcomed Jennifer in to live with her. At the time of fieldwork Jennifer had lived with this woman for several years and was considered an integral part of the family, consequently never needing state support.

Living with others was not without complication, not least because these arrangements were often fundamental to survival and ensuring continued support was imperative. Laura’s destitution undermined her autonomy and ability to contribute towards her friend’s household. While her

asylum claims had all been refused, the UKBA had acknowledged Laura's complex health needs could not be met in Malawi and had granted her temporary admission to receive medical treatment. Eighteen months had lapsed since the deadline had passed and since Laura had last heard from her solicitor or the UKBA. This contrived a deep uncertainty and precarity which had a profound impact on Laura's lived experience, infusing it with impermanence and powerlessness which was revealed in her interactions with home. The house was located in a residential area on the outskirts of the city, some distance from community resources or facilities. Being able to walk only short distances and unable to afford public transport, the house to which Laura felt no ownership or entitlement was at the epicentre of a small spatial radius in which she was essentially confined.

Laura's negotiations within the home were also a product of poor health, poverty and dependency. Her lack of perceived entitlement and eroded self-worth made her reluctant to appropriate too much space and shaped her behaviour. Despite placing her at great physical risk, Laura was reluctant to use space-consuming specialist bathing equipment issued by social services to avoid inconveniencing her friend. Instead, Laura struggled to wash, placing herself at risk of falling and endured daily physical pain. Laura's experience highlights how the imbalanced power dynamic interfered with the potential to transform the homespace into a landscape of care in which Laura might have experienced relief from poor health (Dyck, 2006; Dyck and Dossa, 2007). It also speaks of the ownership and consumption of space, and the nature of occupying an identity which falls short of 'fellow housemate' and even shorter of 'house guest'.

Being HIV positive, Laura also struggled to maintain her personal care and remained acutely aware of hygienic boundaries;

"It's very difficult for me because hygienically [...] I'm not supposed to share things like toothpaste, I need to have my own things. Like today, I didn't wash my mouth with toothpaste 'cos I don't have [any] so until somebody gives me some that's when I'll use it which is not good enough for me 'cos I need them every day so that side is very difficult. I just use, when they are there I use them when they are not I don't [...] I'm not supposed to share, and she's even afraid now, you can see that." Laura

Regardless of the actual risk the sharing of self-care products really posed, Laura's fear of 'contaminating' her friend and by extension the homespace underscores a further complexity with regards her interactions within the home. Her lack of ownership and mastery also played out

through a lack of personal storage space in which to keep her vast collection of anti-retrovirals. Laura overcame this by carrying her medication in an oversized handbag which she kept on her person at all times.

Living with others increased the risk of exploitation, particularly assuming subservient, domestic roles (Pratt, 2005);

“I was going in East Ham and staying with my mother friend’s house. Four, five years I was living with them I’m just making cooking and cleaning. I said “I said I want to die here” because, you know, I was crying always, what is this, what is this life? This is not good life.”  
Noreen

While Noreen felt subordinated she was trapped with nowhere else to go, fearful of protesting in case she was asked to leave. Noreen’s lack of choice and dependency compounded her feelings of powerlessness further increasing the risk of exploitation. Living in the homespaces of others was therefore riddled with complex power relations and the real and imagined threat of unexpected eviction propagated insecurity. This was most pronounced for refused asylum-seekers. In facing complete destitution they had few options and remained one refusal away from the streets. This posed a daily ‘skirting’ of this precarious potential which made women more likely to tolerate poor or exploitative conditions. Practically, living with others sometimes meant sleeping in communal spaces, with little privacy or personal dignity;

“I’m sleeping in the lounge on a mattress, when she’s got a guest I sleep on a chair. The other one when I was living in Whitechapel it was freezing, if you see me I was anaemic [...] the little money that the charity would give me she would ask me to put for gas, so it was really cold [...] ‘cos I was sleeping on the floor, the naked floor until then one day she said I have to leave.” Tulisa

Tulisa highlights tensions over the usage and consumption of homespace, intersecting with issues of entitlement, ownership and power. Her destitution was to all intents and purposes a product of the state’s withdrawal of accommodation and support after she had exhausted her opportunities for appeal. Tulisa was fearful of working illegally and being imprisoned for a second time and so was entirely dependent upon others for support, moving between dwellings whenever necessary. This was an unsettling, transitory existence which caused great anxiety.

On escaping their traffickers both Tulisa and Janet were forced to exchange sex in return for shelter and work.

“He said I would be cleaning, so the man took the paper and said “okay” and he said “where are you staying? How can you be coming here every day to be cleaning?” So that same Pakistani man took me to another Pakistani man to stay there [...] so I would go there when I closed and stay there, the same thing with that man we have sex together, the man would buy me food he would buy me everything.” Janet

In both Janet and Tulisa’s cases their perpetrators had capitalised on their vulnerability and inexperience, simultaneously demanding sex and threatening to report them to the UKBA if they refused. These abusers were both men and women of different non-British nationalities that exploited the women, using shelter as a currency. Prior to detention, Noreen had lived in a house which she described as belonging to her husband and to which she felt no personal or legal entitlements<sup>29</sup>. Over several years Noreen endured a sustained campaign of domestic violence which rendered the homespace precarious and volatile. After one particularly violent encounter the police became involved;

“I got one time domestic violence with him [...] I spent all night in the hospital in emergency, because I don’t know where I am going because I was scared if I am going back and he will kill me again, and police said don’t go back your home, just stay here and morning time you can come. [...] Two weeks they giving me accommodation on behalf of police I was staying in bed and breakfast, and after I was coming again police station and they said, “ah, you have to leave this accommodation because you are illegal, you are staying here and you have to go immigration, Home Office, because they need you”. [...] they said “if you don’t need to go immigration you can go back your husband house”.” Noreen

Noreen’s entitlement to protection was essentially revoked because of her asylum status, leaving her no options but to return to her abusive, possessive husband or face detention and/or removal. For Noreen the home at this time remained a site of violence, uncertainty and relative incarceration.

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<sup>29</sup> For this reason Noreen perceived herself as ‘living with others’ rather than living independently.

Her negotiations with home were further disrupted by her father's renouncement of her for leaving her husband, rendering her estranged from the family home and, as a result, her home country. While living with others was described in most cases as a lifeline, these experiences were riddled with numerous accounts of abuse and exploitation. Furthermore because arrangements were generally only temporary, respondents were unable to plan for the future, reinforcing a generalised precarity.

### *5.1.3 Private rental, local authority or charitable housing*

"I had gone for a party with a friend, when I came back it was around 3am in the morning, I got home my room was locked without my landlord telling me that I'm locking your room or that I've locked your room, when I came I was outside [...] my things were still inside. So I didn't know what to do really, I stayed outside 'til morning. I went to the police station for help, they didn't know or do anything, I went to the Apex where the Council are, I told them my problem, they couldn't help because of my status." Pru

Several women had lived in privately rented accommodation, LA or charitable housing during their time in the UK. Five participants had privately rented before being detained when living and working illegally, but once detained and released it stopped them working, earning and therefore renting. In one exception as the quote above suggests, Pru returned after release to her rented room but was soon evicted when she built up rent arrears. In the absence of entitlements to statutory support, Pru went to living on the streets. This echoes Noreen's experience above, speaking to Agamben's (1998) notion of sovereign abandonment and the vulnerability this caused. While the literature cites numerous detrimental factors and outcomes associated with migrant housing (Phillips, 2006), respondents' descriptions of privately rented homes prior to detention were overwhelming positive. Ella reported that prior to her arrest she lived a comfortable life in a studio flat, paying her council tax diligently every month. Bella had lived in a large, privately owned family home but becoming 'Foreign National Offender' (FNO) had seen her rights to property revoked and her property seized by creditors whilst in detention, forcing her to live in NASS accommodation upon her release.

Changes to health and legal status were key to housing entitlements as detailed in Table 5.1 above. After receiving treatment for serious health problems and being hospitalised, Pru and Mary had both been awarded health-funded LA housing which was motivated by pressures to clear in-patient bed spaces. Pru was allocated a room in a shared house for people with mental health problems which she found noisy and unhomely. As this accommodation was only temporary and was reviewed on a

bi-monthly basis while her social care solicitor fought to keep her off the streets, these arrangements were equally shrouded in uncertainty and impermanence.

Being granted refugee status necessitated a change to housing rights. Dwyer and Brown (2008: 207) note, however, that while being awarded positive status in theory signals enhanced right to housing “tangible opportunities to exercise those rights are limited by the short transition period allowed for the move from NASS accommodation to mainstream provision and/or the shortage of available social housing within a defined dispersal area”. Since being granted refugee status, Jana had been on the waiting list for appropriate social housing for some time while living in an inner-city homeless hostel with her three adult children;

“It’s terrible, I have two rooms I have three children [...] It’s where we cook, it’s where we sit, it’s where we sleep. My daughter also has [...] a psychological problem and she doesn’t sleep in the night so she only manages to sleep around five o’clock in the morning and at that time the boys are waking up either to go to college or to prepare something to eat, [...] my son who’s already in college has nowhere to read and they can’t have friends, they have nowhere to bring them, yeah I can’t also have friends. There is no privacy, I’m dressing the boys are entering and these are big boys, my son is nineteen, my daughter is twenty one.”  
Jana.

This example highlights how the physical home environment affected the everyday lives of Jana and her family, disrupting their routines and intimate geographies. Contrary to the imagined future as a refugee and the anticipated transition to permanent, comfortable and safer housing, the reality had meant further hardship and insecurity within an inhospitable space. For her children this undermined relationships with peers by the lack of a hospitable space to invite friends, tainted no doubt by the stigma of living in a homeless hostel.

Two participants lived in shared accommodation run by a charity in Manchester for destitute asylum-seekers. While a welcome lifeline, Berdour expressed mixed feelings;

“You feel you are homeless, you can’t even afford to rent a respectable place that is clean, keep your dignity with a place, a house where you live at least. You can’t do it, you simply can’t do it because you have no money, you have to accept it, any situation you have to

accept it, the conditions you live in now. You are home in just one room, it is frustrating.”

Berdour

This accommodation denied Berdour personal dignity and represented her eroded status in life more broadly. Later on however when asked if her accommodation felt like home she replied;

“Yeah it does [feel like home]. You know at the end of the day you go home and you’re tired and you’re hungry you just want eat, cup of tea and just put your head on the pillow and you feel relaxed, secure, safe. It’s a home for you. At least it’s a roof over your head. I’m lucky that people in my house they are from Ethiopia so they are close to our tradition, customs you know, Sudan, Ethiopia they are neighbours so I don’t feel I am stranger with them.”

Berdour

This rather different account highlights a key difference between what the housing represented and how it was experienced, with benefits afforded by the socially and culturally meaningful ties formed within this space. Indeed, Berdour also highlights a sense of security and safety. Berdour’s nuanced experience reinforces the idea that conceptualisations of home are multiple, potentially inconsistent and multidimensional. As a consequence, attempts to make generalisable interpretations are problematic and best considered within a framework which accommodates the negotiation of multiple boundaries within variant spaces.

#### *5.1.4 Unconventional dwellings*

It is understood that those without access to social capital are most likely to end up in precarious housing situations or become homeless (D’Addario et al., 2007). Indeed, in addition to the kinds of accommodation detailed here so far some respondents relied upon less conventional dwellings, including squats, buses, bus stops, night shelters and other public spaces which were defined in part by their precariousness. After escaping her traffickers and in the absence of any other support in the UK, Pru began sleeping rough. Initially she slept on buses but eventually formed a particular attachment to a bus stop in north London;

Menah: “And how, what were your feelings to this bus stop?”

Pru: “I would sit there. Maybe I would get a Samaritan to help me but really not knowing where to go. I would just know that that is the bus stop I should sit on, yeah because I didn’t know places. I would fear, maybe I would be killed.”

Menah: "So it was familiar?"

Pru: "Yes, I would just go back to that bus stop [...] I would sit there and sleep there..."

Menah: "On the seat?"

Pru: "Mmm, in the corner or what..."

Pru was severely traumatised by an accumulation of factors including witnessing atrocities in her country of origin, experiencing torture, being separated from family and then enduring three years of captivity and sexual exploitation in the UK. It is not surprising then that in view of this and the deeply uncertain and precarious circumstances in which Pru found herself that she would seek some kind of stability, albeit in an unconventional form. While Pru did not define the bus stop as home in any explicit sense her attachment to it was to disrupt conventional binaries which separate the public from the private.

Over the year she spent sleeping in the bus stop, Pru was befriended by a stranger and from there began building a life for herself over a number of years. After four years however Pru was discovered by the UKBA, sent to prison and then detained. On her release Pru was quickly evicted from her rented room after failing to pay her rent and became homeless again, sleeping on buses and spending the odd night in night shelters. As detailed previously, only when Pru's mental state deteriorated so significantly did the LA step in to accommodate her. The failure to support someone as vulnerable as Pru is perhaps a direct example of what Darling (2009: 649) identifies as the British government's 'deliberate policy of destitution' of asylum-seekers. He argues that "through such acts of sovereign abandonment asylum-seekers are relegated to a position reliant solely upon the ethical sensibilities of others". While eventually housed, the accumulation of Pru's experiences in particular her drawn-out experience of insecurity and homelessness was to contrive what May (2000: 755) has described as a 'hollowed-out' sense of place which, "for those who continue to feel that their home lies elsewhere, may lead to a powerful sense of (dis)placement".

This section has unpacked how different dwellings were experienced during respondents' time in the UK, some of which were described as 'home' and others merely as accommodation. A common feature was the extent to which they afforded varying degrees of (in)security. Not only did women seek, and sometimes find, security through their dwellings, their interactions ultimately propagated insecurity. This variance contributed significantly to a general narrative of precarity in which security might be sought or not. In the next section I build on this by exploring how the material and performative geographies of home were experienced as porous, highlighting on-going negotiations

of boundaries between public/private space and experiences of inclusion/exclusion. This, I suggest, further strengthens an argument for a discourse of precarity as it reveals the nuanced nature of encounters with home as opposed to the strict binaries most commonly applied to the experiences of migrants (Andrijasevic, 2009a). Furthermore, I suggest that the incursion of boundaries were a strategic means of state control.

## 5.2 *Porous home*

This section unpacks how some participants' narratives of home were framed as porous, defined as permeable, leaky, "admitting infiltration" and "easy to cross or penetrate" (Fowler and Fowler, 1995). I begin by considering the material geographies of home before moving on to examine the performative and temporal nature of this phenomenon. This I suggest was a key mechanism by which precarity was manifested throughout everyday life.

### 5.2.1 *Porous boundaries of home*

"You don't feel comfortable, you just feel vigilant. Even you walk in the street you don't know. You're scared. They can stop you in Piccadilly and take you straight to the detention [centre] or at night, six o'clock in the morning they can come and take you from the house because they do. Late night or early morning they come 'cos they know you'll be there at home. You don't feel comfortable, secure. It's very stressful, very stressful." Berdour

In comparison to other housing types, NASS accommodation was experienced as particularly porous and permeable and often understood as a direct extension of the detention estate. The management of these properties was outsourced to private landlords or housing groups, but they were perceived as being regulated by the state albeit from a distance. The physical presentation of the buildings, often large with multiple rooms, evoked memories of the material geography of Yarl's Wood with long corridors and multiple rooms. In this way experiences of incarceration were relived in the everyday, compounding the fear of future detention and perpetuating experiences of porosity and permeability. This threat was caught up with punitive consequence of noncompliance;

"I tell you it's very painful, you go and sign should you make a mistake and not sign they come for you at the house and then they come to the house and then drag them to detention and deport them, so what kind of, that torture continues, that one brings the trauma." Ella

The boundaries of non-institutional homespaces, like private dwellings or the homes of others, were also perceived as porous because of the state's potential violation and infiltration. Participants reported accounts of dawn raids by the UKBA; women being taken from their beds while children slept with them or naked from the bath. Three women were found during raids of shared dwellings meant to locate other undocumented migrants. The spectre of raids and detention was perpetuated not only through first-hand experience but through the imagined potential with rumours propagating fear and anxiety. Respondents spoke of being 'hunted' by the UKBA, with raids on previous residences and a fear of being tracked down to current housing.

“[The UKBA] raid my friend house, they were asking about me. I think after that they are coming in that house where I am living in [charity-run] house. Maybe they are coming here. I was feeling shocked. And shaking, maybe they are coming here.” Noreen

Regardless of whether accounts were first or second hand, an indelible impression was left upon the imaginations of the women which largely defined their relationships with these dwellings and their place in the community more broadly, infiltrating the boundaries of their material and emotional geographies. The experience of the wider community after release from detention may be defined by the fear of police or hate crimes which renders mobility within public spaces a dangerous endeavour for marginalised migrants (Tyler, 2006; Gill, 2009). Indeed, many participants expressed a fear of being re-detained and removed without warning. The sightings of police vans or a knock at the door commonly signalled emotional distress (Doyal and Anderson, 2005; McGregor, 2009) because *knowing* the state had the power to penetrate the home disrupted the fragile sense of security that being 'at home' might have offered, distorting traditional notions of home as a safe haven, or place of refuge and comfort. The effect of this was to deny women the right to feel safe within a dwelling because of an omnipotent sense of imagined transgression.

Perceptions of the physical dwelling as susceptible to state incursion were juxtaposed against experiences of confinement within the boundaries of the home. This was born from compliance with the geopolitical conditions and regulations of being an asylum-seeker and being (or perceived as) 'sub-citizens';

“There is that stigma, that I'm not real, I'm not really part of the community and you can't do much about that, you can't do much about it. I'm not real, I'm not allowed certain things so I've got limitations, I've got to limit myself of what to do and where to go”. Laura

The conditions and regulations that respondents conformed to included restrictions on working, with generalised poverty undermining the capacities for everyday mobility, freedom and choices. Pru's relationship with her LA housing was defined by what she was inhibited from doing;

“So long as, if you are freed completely, you come out of the detention and now you are free or you've got your status, you're free okay that's when you can say “I'm a freed woman”. But when you are still under house-arrest like the way I am, you can't go freely, you can't express yourself, you can't do work freely then there's no way you can be out of the detention. Though you are out you are still being detained psychologically.” Pru

Pru offers a powerful account of feeling contained within the home, restricting her freedom to go about her everyday life and even undermining her ability to express herself. Moreover, despite her release from the physical confines of Yarl's Wood these restrictions were experienced as a continued state of incarceration conceptualised as being 'detained psychologically'. This suggests a fundamental disruption to Pru's emotional geographies with the home becoming a hybridised extension of the detention estate, transforming the home into a space of incarceration. Pru's uncertain immigration status remained pivotal as it was this that contrived her relationship with the emotional and material geographies of home.

Underscoring Pru's experience of being 'detained psychologically' and the interplay of this with her uncertain immigration status was the experience of 'waiting'. Waiting featured heavily within respondents' narratives, perpetuating uncertainty and therefore generalised precarity. Women waited for asylum claims, for solicitors, to be reunited with families and for decisions on housing. This created a dependency on the decision-making of others, primarily the state. Waiting has clear temporal and spatial dimensions as it involves both the interminable passing of time and occurs somewhere. Sutton et al's (2011) consideration of asylum-seekers in South Africa identify that individuals wait for processing and/or deportation in multiple (in)tangible queues. Given that waiting is defined by an ambivalent 'inbetweenness' of time and space, waiting may be framed within a discourse of liminality. These individuals are 'betwixt and between' migrant and resident status and “the bureaucracy of Home Affairs, which migrants must navigate in order to secure official proof that gives them their asylum status, is the black box replete with ambiguity and uncertainty” (31). Furthermore, queuing can be regarded as a ritual that “exemplifies the transition of an individual from one state to another” (Deflem, 1991: 13 cited in Sutton et al., 2011). Waiting evokes “feelings

of powerlessness, helplessness, and vulnerability [...] and all the rage that these feelings provoke” (Crapanzano, 1985: 45).

“I still go through a lot of depression, nightmare even after because you know living in this condition, you don’t know when it’s going to be [...] they say the same thing you not contact them about the progress of the application you have to wait so, now how long you have to wait?” Bella

While participants waited in queues outside reporting centres and during detention, their waiting also occurred within the community, particularly within spaces of home. As Pru above suggests, the home as a site of waiting was preconditioned through enforced inactivity and poverty. The home was thus transformed into a liminal, precarious and porous space, contingent upon immigration status and “shrouded in secrecy, uncertainty and ambiguity; conceptualised as a sequence and interaction between structure and ‘anti-structure’, or as an ambiguous phase between two states of being” (Sutton et al., 2011: 30). This reinforces comparisons between the home and the detention centre; a place of waiting for verdicts which would dictate the next phase of life. For Mya, the actualisation of refugee status signified the crucial transformation of home from a public and penetrable space to a private one not so easily disrupted.

“There’s a big difference because you feel, if you get status you feel, you don’t fear anything anymore. Like anytime the Home Office can come on the bus, they come at your home, they can come! If they want. But now if they come to my house I’m not scared, I’m not scared, I’m confident but if you don’t have the status of course you don’t know what is going to happen to you if they come.” Mya

For Mya the meaning of home was inextricable from immigration status, with the impact of status assessed by the degree to which the boundaries of her emotional and material geographies of home could be maintained.

Bella’s containment within the home was perhaps the most tangible of all participants. The conditions of her release from detention to NASS accommodation on the outskirts of London demanded compliance with a curfew and electronic tagging system. In practice, she wore a plastic cuff around her ankle which corresponded with a telephone directory shaped device located in her bedroom. This enabled the UKBA to speak directly to Bella through the device and detect if she was

absent from the perimeter of the dwelling during curfew hours. The system was not however entirely reliable given the size of the large property and this significantly disrupted Bella's interaction with the homespace;

“Sometimes they [UKBA] can call you to pick it up, like for example if you move [the box] and everything or the children move it, then they can call you to find out what happened. But if we are downstairs and we never heard anything [...] or if I'm on the phone [...] or if I'm in the garden because I know my time that from 10pm I should be home, so I tell them “I'm at home, I'm allowed to go anywhere”. But there have been many occasions when I've been to the police station, spend the night there, I mean it was just a trauma.” Bella

Despite Bella's release from Yarl's Wood the boundaries of the detention estate were seen to have expanded to encompass and merge with the physical dwelling, with the electronic tagging system representing the state's literal presence within the home. Bella's real and perceived bodily interaction with and mobility within the building was therefore controlled and monitored. This reinforced a sense of porosity as when (incorrectly) deemed non-compliant, the UKBA entered the house and removed Bella into police custody. Furthermore, the tag's visceral, proximal contact with her flesh was an embodied reminder of the continued grip the state continued to maintain on her body and mind. This had a dehumanising effect with the state contriving Bella's transformation to a cyborg state for ease of control, equally reproducing the home as a carceral space in which state control was extended (Haraway, 1991; Bloomfield, 2001). Viewed another way, the tagging system had facilitated Bella's release from detention and enabled her to live 'at home' with her children who would otherwise have remained in state care. Nonetheless the transformation of home in this way was to redefine traditional institutional boundaries between the inside/outside and the private/public (Vitores and Domènech, 2003).

### *5.2.2 Routinised everyday practices of home*

Not only was the home perceived as porous through the UKBA's incursion across the physical boundaries of home, some respondents reported a further transgression of personal geographies within the home and how these were enacted and performed. The porosity of home was further actuated through the state's real and imagined infiltration of participants' everyday, routinised practices, many invested in the home. While house raids were an example of the subverted physical boundaries, it also represented the literal invasion of domestic space and disrupted the performance of everyday activities.

“That day when they came it was 8 o’clock I was going out, I was still preparing my supper. I didn’t even eat it, that’s where I, the UK Border got me in the kitchen, everybody you know when they enter the house they divide themselves, “oh God” I said, “now this is the end of my life”.” Pru

Although Pru’s account of an unexpected house-raid highlights the infiltration of the kitchen space by armed UKBA officers, there is an incongruity between the performance of the interminably interrupted homely activities with the tactical ones employed by the officers to ‘divide’ themselves to prevent other residents escaping the building. Similarly, Laura described the invasion of her intimate and personal geographies during a raid;

“It was horrible because when the immigration officers came to the house they found me bathing [...] they asked my daughter “where is your mum?”, “oh she’s bathing” and these officers came straight into the bathroom. I said “I’m bathing” and they found me naked and they said “no, you can’t finish, we are taking you”, I didn’t finish bathing.” Laura

Not only did the UKBA infiltrate the physical boundaries of the home, it also disrupted Laura’s performance of intimate activities, transgressing multiple personal boundaries. The home is understood as entwined with our intimate geographies and the house-raid disrupted these profoundly. Furthermore, Pru and Laura’s experiences highlight not only the disruption to their domestic activities but their inherent *incompletion* that this intervention caused. This resonates with Benjamin’s (1985) notion of temporal porosity which Stavrides (2006: 2) reminds us is experienced through performative acts which “are both separated and connected through temporal passages that represent the precarious fleeting experience of occasion”. This conceptualisation suggests that because the temporal passages (between the completion and incompletion of performing certain tasks) were disrupted through the state’s intervention, the experience of ‘fleeting’ precariousness was inflated to a more comprehensive, precarious experience.

Laura’s experience underscores the porosity of home on a performative level as not only did the state invade the domestic space of the bathroom it also interrupted, halted and impeded the performance of intimate, home-based acts of self-care. This disrupted the very fabric of domestic life and transformed the dwelling into a public arena on which power dynamics were realised. While the effect of these strategies for wellbeing are examined in a later chapter, one must acknowledge the

corrosive impact of these micro-level, performative geographies in which quotidian, yet critical negotiations were played out, sometimes resulting in powerlessness and subjugation.

As well as the real and imagined infiltrations of everyday routinised practices within homespaces, the porosity of home was demonstrated performatively through the state's control of women's everyday routines and mobilities, actuated beyond the boundaries of the physical dwelling in the community as a critical extension of home. Domosh (1998) asserts, "when we move out of the house and on to the streets, our identities are constantly being monitored, judged, constituted, negotiated and represented". Indeed, the state's dictation of spatial and temporal routines enacted in the community partly informed the relationships that women had with their local communities by restricting their freedom and autonomy.

The state's dictation of these relationships was further actualised for those participants who were, or had been, in receipt of Section 4 support. Asylum-seekers who have an active claim with the Home Office may apply for Section 95<sup>30</sup> support with accommodation and cash if they can demonstrate some key prerequisites. Those who are single and have been refused and exhausted opportunities for appeal may apply for Section 4 (2)<sup>31</sup> support as detailed in Section 4 of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. Only those meeting certain, specific criteria are granted this, including "demonstrating willingness to leave the UK, having a medical reason not to travel, or being unable to travel because there is no safe route of return. The person must be destitute or about to become destitute" (Refugee Council, 2013: 3). Section 4 (2) support includes accommodation and £35.39<sup>32</sup> per week, approximately £5 a day credited to an 'Azure' charge card which may only be used in certain shops<sup>33</sup>. These funds are officially to 'cover food and essential toiletries only' (Home Office, 2013b), restrict where asylum-seekers shop, what they purchase, and stop them from buying clothing and other material items (Ellis, 2010). Saving up for larger items is also prevented as users may only roll £5 over each week, nor can funds be used to pay for travel. This had multiple implications not least participants' mobility and consumption of space within the community and

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<sup>30</sup> Section 95 is the colloquial name given to the type of support provided to asylum-seekers under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, while an asylum claim or appeal decision is awaited.

<sup>31</sup> All participants living in NASS accommodation were in receipt of Section 4 support with the exception of Amelia who received Section 95 support.

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/asylum/support/apply/section4/>

<sup>32</sup> Accurate at the time of writing, this figure is less than half of the equivalent Income Support rate (Refugee Action, 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Recognised shops include a selected few high-street supermarkets such as Sainsburys, Tesco and Morrisons.

capacities to 'make home' because women were limited to shop in stores where Azure cards were accepted and were restricted in their capacity to buy affordable material items for the home or traditional food stuffs usually purchased in cash from markets (Reynolds, 2010). The experience of using these cards was also heavily stigmatising;

“One time I was [in a shop] trying to get something and that person didn't know so she called the manager [...] I'm trying to pay and you know people are waiting to pay, and obviously people are listening, looking isn't it? “What's going on? Why is she not going fast?” and he comes “this is from Home Office, she's not allowed to take employment, you have to do this, and this is like this...” you know? I mean every single detail. It's such an embarrassment.” Khanara

Khanara's experience of negotiating the quotidian space of a supermarket to buy everyday material items was disrupted by the state's interventions through the compulsory use of the Azure card. Not only did this limit where she went to shop, her social interaction within this shared, public space was tainted by humiliation, reinscribing her positionality as a foreign and undesirable Other.

The state further dictated routines by compelling asylum-seekers to 'sign on' on a weekly or fortnightly basis<sup>34</sup>. For some, reporting centres were located close to their place of residence but for others the journey was significantly further and more arduous. The location and geography of these institutional places criminalised asylum-seekers, not least because they were sometimes required to queue outside large, conspicuous buildings; an axiomatic and humiliating spectacle of Otherness for the passing world to see. Conversely, while living in a rural village Mary had reported to a police station which held explicit criminal associations. The financial support that asylum-seekers received to travel to reporting centres varied, with journeys under a certain distance remaining ineligible for reimbursement. The majority were required to pay for travel in anticipation of the trip and while this was eventually reimbursed, having the cash to pay for travel upfront was problematic and women often relied upon hand-outs from friends or charities (BID, 2012). As a result 'signing on days' featured as a day when women would make use of a day travel card for multiple purposes.

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<sup>34</sup> A minority were granted permission to sign on less frequently in extenuating circumstances such as chronic illness but this was unreliable. Mary was pre-emptively granted a month's grace to undergo major surgery but on her return was detained for 'absconding' and failing to sign on.

“[I go] every Wednesday to sign [...] that same day I will use that travel card to go to south London to meet my friends, those Christians sisters and brothers to go to their house so maybe they will give me like £10 if I want to visit them and I use it to buy gari, to buy like tapioca. Then I will come and cook it.” Janet

Janet’s weekly routine was shaped by the UKBA’s regulations but she capitalised on this opportunity by exploiting the paid travel to access geographically distant social, financial and cultural resources. As a result she evoked a sense of home in her NASS accommodation by cooking Zimbabwean food. Only by seeing friends face-to-face did Janet receive cash gifts which she used to buy ingredients from an African market normally inaccessible to her both because of its geographical location and her lack of cash. This suggests that while the UKBA largely dictated the weekly routines of respondents with asylum-seeker status, this was at times contested with consequences for the consumption of public space and attempts to make home.

In the main however, generalised poverty and restrictions to mobility were significant enough to make women feel trapped, immobile and excluded, interfering with their access to and interactions with public spaces. These issues with access to power and interconnections with places resonates with Massey’s (1994: 149) power geometry. She reminds us that some individuals “initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it” and some “groups who are really in a sense in charge of time-space compression, who can really use it and turn it to advantage, whose power and influence it very definitely increases” (149). In some more extreme cases these flows rendered women essentially housebound - or as Pru described it above ‘under house arrest’.

The act of signing was for all participants characterised by fear and uncertainty. It was not uncommon for asylum-seekers to be re-detained unexpectedly and this was a significant source of anxiety (Klein and Williams, 2012).

“When I go there [to sign on] I don’t need to remind myself – it just comes automatically to me. I start having the palpitations, I start having tummy aches, sweating and diarrhoea – what’s that? That’s trauma already.” Jennifer

Jennifer’s weekly journey to the reporting centre was fraught with apprehension and this was experienced and described in visceral terms. Longhurst et al (2009: 334) assert that “migrating

involves developing an understanding of different social, cultural, economic and political systems, but it also involves coming to a sensual and visceral understanding of different micro-geographies of the body". While these authors are speaking of migrants' relationships with food, the experiences of my respondents with regards their performance of everyday life was often described in these terms. Considering the visceral experiences of migrant women is therefore to make sense of the ideas of subjectivity, materialities of the body, power and difference (Probyn, 2000).

A lexicon of porosity within geographical investigations of space is not new, indeed key critics attest that home is spatially and temporally porous and remains an intersection of social relations and emotions (Massey, 1995; Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Stavrides (2006: 2) considering Benjamin's (1985) work on urban thresholds has conceptualised urban space through the notion of porosity, asserting that "it is not that action is contained in space. Rather, a rich network of practices transforms every available space into a potential theater of expressive acts of encounter [...] Porosity characterizes above all the relationship between private and public space, as well as the relationship between indoor and outdoor space." Stavrides explores this spatial porosity which he stresses is effected through architecture and physical boundaries, acting as the 'porous membrane' between different spaces. While space is innately porous and UK born citizens also encounter messy and untidy everyday geographies (Ettlinger, 2007) two key factors distinguish their experiences from these ex-detained migrant women. Firstly, their variegated capacity to regulate this porosity (Callon, 1998) and secondly the way in which state intervention was felt to propagate and make active use of this it to further control over their lives. Both of these factors were inextricable from notions of power and control and remained embroiled within expositions of home. Furthermore, while a common experience porosity was experienced differentially by participants resulting in a curious juxtaposition between containment and unboundedness which contrived a precarious state of being.

### *5.3 Chapter conclusions*

This chapter has explored accounts of the physical home and shown that, for many participants, this was not experienced as private and contained but as a place where the real and imagined reach of the state extended beyond the physical boundaries, infiltrating their imaginations, routinised everyday practices, relationship networks, cultural ideals and values - factors that Butcher (2010: 24-25) identifies as constitutive of a critical geography of home. Brickell (2012a: 585) asserts that the micro-politics of home are inextricable from a broader geopolitical rhetoric which has become infused with a discourse of home, and she contends that "geopolitics is influenced by, and emerges

from, the home". The consideration of state intervention in this chapter has gone some way to conceptualise this imbrication. Indeed, the framing of home through key ideas of insecurity and porosity has illustrated how these homespaces were experienced as being invaded and infiltrated by the state, compounding feelings of powerlessness and subordination and shaping participants' mobilities and interactions with their wider communities (Brickell, 2012b). It has been suggested then that for some participants the home, NASS accommodation in particular, served as an extension of the detention estate through the performativity of everyday life and the embodied experience within the physical dwelling.

While these experiences could well be understood as illustrative of Agamben's (1998) bare life, particularly the accounts of women like Tulusa and Pru who were rendered destitute and homeless by the state, the other encounters with the physical home offer a picture which remained less absolute and the boundaries less clearly defined. The conceptual import of (in)security and porosity reveals the complex interchange and blurring of boundaries which these women negotiated, challenging traditional binaries of public/private or inside/outside and demanding constant reworking. This demonstrates how, for these women, the home became the site on which demonstration of power were enacted, reinforced and in some cases contested. These experiences, I have suggested, are best framed within a discourse of precarity which allows for the experience of these fluid and evolving boundaries.

The discussion here has built upon the last chapter in constructing a discourse of precarity for better framing the lives of my participants. This I have suggested was born not just from the processes and legacies of detention but their negotiations with home before and after release. Maintaining a focus on home, the next chapter extends this interpretation by examining participants' accounts of belonging and/or 'feeling at home' in the UK and how these were contingent upon their perceptions of and negotiations with multiple identities. These I explain were inseparable from immigration status and the variegated positionalities and subjectivities of being migrant women. Furthermore I suggest these were not only a product of everyday precarity but were instrumental in fuelling this precarious state of being.

Belonging and home are entangled with identity as the question of 'who am I?' remains inseparable from 'where do I belong?' (Loader, 2006: 25). This association is complex as not only are the processes involved in creating home and developing a sense of belonging instrumental in the construction of identity, migrant identities and experiences of home are plural (Blunt and Varley, 2004; Antonsich, 2010). Ralph and Staeheli (2011: 521) attest that "a loosening of identity moorings and markers allows for a fluid model of identification with various places, various homes, whereby many migrants articulate a multilayered, 'hybrid' identity that reflects (and perhaps shapes) their experience of home, self and belonging". This highlights the significance of multiplicity when considering the identities of migrants as well as drawing attention to the contextual and spatial forces within which migrants are variably situated. Antonsich (2010: 645) distinguishes between "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)". As such, I examine respondents' accounts of belonging while also noting the intersection with other socio/politico-spatial factors embroiled in a politics of belonging which are instrumental in 'loosening identity moorings'. I use 'belonging' interchangeably with 'feeling at home' to reflect respondents' own broad conceptualisations.

The first section of this chapter examines how belonging and identity were perceived, experienced and negotiated through the adoption and contestation of particular discourses; notably the 'criminological other' and '(not) being human'. The second unpacks how uncertain immigration status from which these discourses are born was influential in shaping respondents' accounts of belonging and negotiation of multiple identities. In furthering the deconstruction of interweaving identities, the third section picks up the discussion in Chapter Four on the infantilisation of detention and examines how identity intersected with patriarchal state intervention beyond release and how this compounded gendered experiences. This I argue shaped their sense of belonging and perpetuated gendered, subordinate identities. Interrogating further the gendered nature of respondents' lives and their articulations with home, the fourth section explores how respondents' gendered life courses were disrupted. I conclude by exploring participants' imagined futures, in particular how the country of origin featured, drawing together the themes of belonging, home and identity. Throughout I consider how these narratives speak to a discourse of precarity.

## 6.1 *Human vs. criminal*

“It’s thinking I’m here, I am wrong, I’m not a thief, I didn’t kill anybody but I am labelled as a criminal but actually I was doing this just to help myself and my children and my family, “oh God now everybody knows I’m a criminal”, things like that, what people think.” Laura

Diken (2004: 83-84) notes that “our society seems unable to decide whether the asylum-seeker is the true subject of human rights, which it invites everybody to accept as the most sacred of the sacred, or simply a criminal, a thief, who threatens ‘us’ with abusing ‘our’ welfare system”. This conundrum was one that respondents grappled with, suggesting an internalisation and working through of political, social and cultural debates to which they were centrally located. This was revealed through two key related identity discourses, on the one hand the ‘criminological other’ and on the other ‘(not) being human’. Both remained contingent upon and inextricable from what were perceived as dehumanising treatment and enduring identifications with criminality, tied to immigration identities. This, I suggest in the later sections, had consequences for belonging not least because the discourses which maintain boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (defined through varying identities) lie at the heart of a politics of belonging (Antonsich, 2010). While the first discourse acknowledged these boundaries, the latter of ‘(not) being human’ was offered in part as a response to this criminal identification and was for some, a vehicle for (re)negotiating this deviant positionality. Valentine et al (2009: 236) recognise that identities are “never produced along one axis of difference but are intersectional [...] and involves consideration of the ways that individuals claim some available narratives of identity or disavow others”. This speaks of participants’ endeavours to claim a ‘human’ discourse and reject an abjected criminal alternative.

### 6.1.1 *Criminological Others*

Migrants, asylum-seekers in particular, are portrayed as deviant and occupy a peripheral position within society with the media assisting to perpetuate portrayals that feast upon historic fears and anxieties<sup>35</sup> (Tyler, 2006; Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008). Pickering (2001: 185) asserts that the press fortifies the deviancy of asylum-seekers by reproducing hegemonic discourses surrounding “the integrity of the nation-state; the biologically generated notion of racial otherness; and disease”. In conceptualising human tendencies to separate people into binaries of good/bad and us/them, geographical proponents have looked to psychoanalytic literature. Sibley (2001) proposes that

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2003/dec/10/sun.pressandpublishing>

humans mount a multiscaled protective response (of the self, the home, community and nation) to a perceived threat of the Other, to individual and collective identities. Moreover, society brands these others as deviant and these dichotomisations are (re)constructed through the state and the media, propagating a 'fear of the Other' which is projected onto and internalised by the individuals and groups in question, mapped at a number of spatial scales (Hubbard, 2005). This resonates with geopolitical investigations of home and how these fears and binary oppositions are reproduced and reinscribed through the scales of home; from the body, the material home, the community and the nation-state (Brickell, 2012a).

Banks (2008: 43) emphasises that "current approaches to asylum are evocative of approaches to crime and punishment", demonstrated through the increasingly punitive nature of asylum policy, the conflation of asylum with criminality within public and political discourse, and the shift within asylum policy which legitimises the state as 'protector'. The latter echoes a homeland discourse and the right this entrusts upon the state to protect what is portrayed as 'domestic' and imperative to 'our' safety. Underpinning such discourses are representations of asylum-seekers as deviants who take advantage of Britain's goodwill (Welch and Schuster, 2005). Such divisive measures serve to homogenise and reify asylum-seekers as a deviant collective or 'criminological others' which (re)constructs asylum as a response to insecurity rather than humanitarian need (Banks, 2008: 46).

Participants were acutely aware of their positionality in the political and public imaginary, and framed their accounts of identity in relation to the 'criminological Other'. This was imbricated with narratives of detention as vehicles for these 'criminal imaginaries', interwoven with accounts of unjust treatment. These insights register with an Agambenian (2005) conceptualisation of the state of exception through which the exempted other is created. Jennifer spoke of coming to terms with her criminalisation;

"After being put in detention I thought I was happy. To me I thought they were helping me. But after getting in there after a month or so that's when I realised. Some ladies whom I had been speaking in my language told me, "you're in prison, you're in detention". I thought it was a home, that's how people are being helped in this country. [...] I was shocked and said "prison? What have I done to be put in a prison? I've done no criminal record. I came to ask for safety and now I'm criminalised, put in prison." Jennifer

Jennifer's interchangeable use of 'prison' with 'detention' reflects the popular conflation between places and practices of incarceration for criminal and immigration purposes. Some participants' criminal identities were more explicit; five were detained following a prison sentence, the majority for using false documents. It was their identity of 'foreign criminal' which added complexity to their asylum claims, reiterating the significance of uncertain identity to the construction of criminality. The identity of 'asylum-seeker' is inherently uncertain as a political construction which dictates the state's management of individuals whose 'real' identities cannot be established and legitimises the use of punitive measures (Griffiths, 2012: 715). Of the five who had been charged with holding false documents and working illegally all but Bella had escaped violence and sexual exploitation. These participants were genuinely bewildered that endeavours to survive constituted criminal activity and felt they were treated as murderers or terrorists. Differentially, as a 'Foreign National Offender' (FNO) Bella's identity was perhaps the most powerfully infused with criminality. The labelling of criminal identities was embroiled with experiences of detention, being handcuffed, physically assaulted and transported in vans;

"When they detain me and they want to take me from the car to the building they put like handcuff, like a criminal that is what I couldn't understand. What crime have I commit? Why you treat me like a criminal? [...] You feel like you are a criminal without a crime, you've done nothing wrong just you apply for asylum, seeking a safe place." Berdour

Detention had long-term consequences for participants' self-identification and how they were perceived by their local and transnational communities, fragmenting social relationships. For Berdour this caused shame and her criminal identity endured through the susceptibility of repeated incarceration.

"It's a mixed feeling. You've been released from that place but it doesn't mean that you are safe. It could still happen to you next day and you feel insecure. You feel like you've done something bad and like criminal they stop you and put you in detention." Berdour

Khanara also felt the criminal identity was one that she now inexorably embodied. Speaking of the UKBA's everyday regulations she said;

"I suppose it's normal compared to being in Yarl's Wood, being treated like that everywhere. Treatment in Yarl's Wood is like I haven't done any crime in my life. It's like I've been

sentenced for the crime I haven't done or the thing I haven't done, it is just exactly like prison." Khanara

For Khanara, her detention and asylum-seeker status had 'contaminated' her identity and life beyond with criminality which she felt explained her on-going everyday treatment. These included state interventions such as signing on and living in specific buildings in high crime-rate areas. Beyond detention therefore, features of everyday life continued to stigmatise participants and label them as Others.

Contrastively, the process of Othering underpinning the criminalisation of asylum-seekers was employed defensively by Mary as a point of difference. She separated herself from those who had worked illegally and were in her opinion legitimately detained and guilty of 'real' crimes. Pru however distinguished between 'illegality' and 'criminality';

"That was the worst thing in my life being in a cell whereby I did not steal, I did not rob, I did not do any crime just for being illegal they put me in a cell. It was very traumatising, I feel if I had, if I'd had something to kill myself I would. I would really. Because that is the thing I said in my life I would never do to be in a cell." Pru

Pru's incarceration in a police cell for a night before being transported to detention held particularly negative connotations and caused great distress and shame. It also suggests that criminal identities are not based entirely upon the law, but are deep-rooted ideals of what is morally justified or not. This marks a tension between subjective moral codes and the dominant word of law, with consequences for how individuals negotiate competing identities.

### *6.1.2 (Not) being human*

The second striking discourse was '(not) being human'. This articulated with the criminalised Othering framework discussed previously, as a consequence of criminalisation and in some cases an (in)direct response to it. Some narratives of life beyond detention conveyed the endeavours of the UKBA to dehumanise participants through 'inhumane' treatment.

"Immigration are also predatory that's the worst part of it, the evil part of it. They may refuse you, they do not send you the letter or to your solicitor. When you go to sign they say

“oh, sorry you have no application” and that’s when they arrest you. I don’t know why they do that. It’s really inhumane, I find it very, very inhumane.” Bella

Bella’s feelings of being dehumanised were further reinforced by her experience of electronic tagging within the home, disrupting any potential to ‘feel at home’ within these spaces. Haben also spoke of poor treatment which she felt fell short of that offered to domestic animals.

“In this country more than asylum-seeker, dogs have more treatment, good treatment more than asylum-seeker. When you want something no one sees you, when you call Home Office [...] no one want to talk to you, no one listens to you.” Haben

For Pru, destitution arising from the withdrawal of support from the state was equally dehumanising;

“No money. Very stressful, very hard time. We can’t spend money from the shop. Like we are disabled. Like we are not human, not human being, we just like animals. I think, I’m destitute, all hopes, all wish, my all wish is gone.” Pru

Pru’s experience of financial restrictions and enforced inactivity as a consequence of her immigration status rendered her ‘less than human’ which caused stress and hopelessness. Similarly, Laura spoke of profound, long-lasting consequences of detention;

“So the next day they gave me tickets, train ticket to come to Nottingham. That was when I saw that I was not the Laura I know. I was afraid of anything, in the road, afraid of people, I was afraid of everything because I wasn’t trusting myself that I’m a human being. It’s just a very bad situation.” Laura

Laura’s incarceration was so erosive to her self-esteem and confidence that it disrupted a sense of humanity. This might be perceived as a process of institutionalisation which stripped Laura of her identity, speaking to Agamben’s (1998; 2005) conceptualisation of the *homo sacer*. Agamben asserts that incarcerated individuals are a mere component of a system which is “made sense of in terms of the nation-state, and the no longer human [...] There is thus an interiorized humanity and a remainder or detritus humanity left over from the interiorizing process” (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004: 35). While contentious, this conceptualisation offers an explanation of this discourse arising

from respondents accounts as they negotiated a biopolitical zone of indistinction (Diken, 2004). It also accompanies a kind of body politic which Bigo (2002: 68-69) argues conceptualises the state as a container or a 'body endangered by migrants' which must therefore be shielded from invasion. This raises the question of how, if at all, individuals negotiated the path away from these so-called 'zones of exemption' and began to reclaim the title of human having been stripped of it during extended (and in some cases repeated) periods of incarceration. Laura's experience suggests that this came at a price, with the embodied experience of bare life enduring beyond release. Indeed, as the discussion in the previous section suggests, some features of everyday life encountered after release perpetuated the identity of the 'criminological other'.

This was not however straightforward. Not only did a discourse of '(not) being human' emerge synchronously and as a consequence of associations with criminality, for a minority it was reclaimed and employed responsively. Even Laura who had felt her subjective assurances of 'being human' abraded by her incarceration called upon her positionality as a 'human' to beseech support from the state;

"For me now what I need is a home, a house because even though I am being treated like I am unwanted I'm still alive and I'm still in the UK. I need support and I'm still a human being, I'm still a woman like anybody else, I need support." Laura

Laura's identification with her 'human rights' might be understood as a sign of resilience through which she contested her exclusion and resisted becoming the 'detritus humanity left over from the interiorizing process' of which detention was a strategic component (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2004: 35). Others also employed a discourse of 'being human' as a response to their perceived sub-citizen position in society and redress the balance. Mya stressed that "we are all with one blood" which communicated the likeness of all humankind which included asylum-seekers. Ella was the most persuasive in this regard. Despite her status as an asylum-seeker she had not only convinced a local GP surgery to register her but persuaded a local bank to give her a basic bank account and an adult college to enrol her. These successes were highly unusual, predicated upon Ella's identification as a 'human being';

"When I went back I said "I've been enrolled!" They said "how can you be enrolled without a card?" I said "it's me, it not the card, what would the card do? The card is not going to study, it's me!". 'Cos that's what I told him [College principal] "it's not the card or the paperwork you're talking about, it's the human that's more important". [...] "Don't talk about the

papers whatever, talk about the person because papers can't speak on their own, but me I can defend myself." Ella

By (re)claiming the universality of human Ella spoke to the sentiments of the college principal, negotiating entitlements usually denied to asylum-seekers. This superseded her 'sub-citizenship', transcended undesirable asylum status and enabled Ella to forge new identities. This might be understood as an active negotiation of translocational positionality which Anthias (2001: 634 cited in Bailey, 2012) asserts is best conceptualised as social practices which occur in "the space at the intersection of structure (social position/social effects) and agency (social positioning/ meaning and practice)". Ella's endeavours to reposition herself therefore corroborates conceptualisation of translocational positionality as "an intermediate term between structure and agency, which involves not just locations but also understanding of the ways in which individuals intersubjectively organize, represent or perform identification" (Bailey, 2012: 854).

"I told them [...] forget about those titles you are getting here. But we are all human, we are entitled for everything because we are human, if you were asylum-seekers why do we breathe the same air? It should be separate that asylum-seekers don't breathe fresh air, but we breathe the same! Is there any difference? [...] So I always argued with them "it's up to you if you're asylum, me I'm being, despite what I've gone through but I'm still being." Ella

Ella's account of 'being' relates to 'human being' but it also resonates with conceptualisations of belonging first put forth by Probyn (1996). Probyn problematised '(be)longing' as "'a desire for becoming-other', a longing for someone/something else" (5). This subverts simplistic interpretations of belonging as a fixed, stable and un-reflexive concept recognising it instead as a fluid process of *becoming* rather than of *being* (Ilcan, 2002: 8-9; Mee, 2009). While the conceptual emphasis by these authors is of 'longing for something else' and of flux, Ella's sense of belonging was manifested through a reclaiming of her very essence as a human being. Ella was however unusual, not least her remarkable aptitudes for communication. This highlights the inequitable provision of support which disadvantages those lacking the necessary interpersonal skills due to trauma or mental health problems (and therefore those who might be particularly needy).

This section has examined two competing identity discourses that were a consequence of and response to uncertain legal status and detention. The next section takes up the lens of home once

again to unpack how belonging and ‘feeling at home’ intersected with identity and uncertain immigration status.

### *6.2 Belonging and uncertain legal status*

Citing Probyn (1996), Mee and Wright (2009: 772) argue that ‘belonging’ is inherently geographical as it translates to ‘being in place’. Like home, belonging has formal and informal components, is multiscalar, multispatial and multifaceted and both incorporate and operate on a range of scales and are embodied through varying positionalities (Mallett, 2004; Akinwumi, 2006; Binaisa, 2011). Participants’ narratives revealed that belonging and ‘feeling at home’ was contingent on how safe and secure they felt. This was especially important for those who had fled atrocity, fear or violence and for whom idealised perceptions of being ‘at home’ were inextricable from finding acceptance, peace, freedom and safety. Security and safety are at the heart of belonging (Fenster, 2005; Loader, 2006; Buonfino and Thomson, 2007; Alexander, 2008), indeed Ignatieff (2010: 6) asserts that “where you belong is where you are safe; and where you are safe is where you belong”. Jennifer reiterated this sentiment;

“Home is home. If there is peace, home is home – it doesn’t matter where you come from.”  
Jennifer.

While ideologically being at home meant an absence of fear and worry, in practice this was problematic. Immigration status was central to accounts of belonging not just because it was laden with criminality, but because it legitimised the state’s real or imagined interventions which precipitated uncertainty, dependency and lack of freedom (Fenster and Vizel, 2007; Nelson and Hiemstra, 2008; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis, 2008). These interventions included how long women could stay in the UK, where they lived, the resources they were entitled to, and the regimentation of everyday routines, choices and mobilities (Stewart, 2005). This involved the state’s capacity to infiltrate domestic dwellings and remove and/or detain respondents unexpectedly, creating a generalised precarity which permeated everyday lives. This precarity therefore disrupted capacities to materially ‘make home’ and undermined a ‘sense of home’;

“When I’m still like this I don’t think I can feel that home is home or whatever. Because the most important thing for a person is being independent and free, but if you are still under authority there is no way you can say “oh, home is home or whatever.” Pru

Because Pru's freedom and autonomy was undermined so was her capacity to 'feel at home'. Stewart (2005) notes the period of asylum-seeking is dominated by state power during which the 'subject' is defined and excluded which can forcefully and detrimentally influence migrant subjectivities and sense of home (Porteous, 1976). Echoing this, Haben identified the spectre of removal as a deterrent to feeling settled;

"No, I don't know even [if I feel at home], I don't know it. Like tomorrow or even if they deport me to Italy, I don't know that is why, on the stress always." Haben

Berdour's asylum-seeker status meant assuming a subordinate, deviant positionality which disrupted her identity as an independent, professional woman;

"How to adapt to this new kind of life? You were independent and suddenly you find yourself you depend on others, even the really simple things. It's frustrating, so frustrating, and people thinks about you like asylum-seeker, they think asylum-seekers are, they don't know nothing, they just came from the savage Africa! Here to take over your life, your work, your jobs, your house. They don't evaluate people correctly. They are very intelligent people amongst asylum-seekers, there's doctors, teachers, pharmacists, very intelligent and educated people, but people don't look." Berdour

Tyler (2006: 196) observes that media and political representations of asylum-seekers constitute a strategy of hypervisibility which simultaneously erases an entire population from view. Indeed, Berdour's awareness of negative public sentiment disrupted her identity and sense of belonging. She also underscores the significance of occupation to identity construction and the disruptive consequences of immigration status, something I return to later in this chapter.

Implicit to the relationship between legal identity and belonging were the processes and legacies of detention. For those who were detained sooner after arrival, detention had framed their early relationship with and perceptions of the UK. A minority however, like Jennifer, distinguished between the state and the wider UK population, forming meaningful attachments to a UK-born community. For others, detention had interfered inexorably;

"The way I think is that you don't belong anywhere [...] Because first of all I had friends I had known and these people are sat talking. They are talking ill against you and "what did she

do? But they don't detain people, why is she in detention? Maybe she has done something horrible" [...] And when you hear different stories it is as if, I was affected so badly. I hated people for the bad comments they made." Mary

Colson (2003) argues that trust in migrant communities is dependent upon reciprocity and the potential for shared futures and belonging. Mary's detention was a point of difference which disrupted the reciprocity of shared experience with her friends. Research also concurs that forced migrants' capacities for trust is often fragile, engendered through alienation and the loss of multiple boundaries which can compound uncertainty (Oliver-Smith, 1991: 2; Baxter and Krulfeld, 1997). Detention and release exacerbates this by re-shifting boundaries, demanding a re-evaluation of relationships, identities and attachments to place. This speaks to the discussion in Chapter Four and the pervasive nature of the UK's (dis)trustful landscape through which all women navigated.

Khanara's feelings of belonging were characterised by strong injustice on account of her ill-treatment as an asylum-seeker;

"If I was at home [in the UK] I wouldn't feel like as if I don't belong here. If I was in my country I would feel "oh my god, this is my country, I love this country". I don't feel like that. When I was here like in the first few months or few years [...] I really loved this country, and I thought people were great [...] Now it's just like I'm just like extra there. It's like when the time is right I'm just going to be kicked out." Khanara

Khanara's sense of belonging had deteriorated, undermined by her superfluous identity and the state's readiness to remove her. This had corrupted her perception and commitment to the UK if granted asylum;

"I would not want to be lie here, insulted like a trash and put down by the authority, put down by the people [...] I thought of this country as my home, as my country and you know everything I do I would think "oh my god, if I throw this rubbish in the street that means that someone's going to come and, that means it's going to cost the country money, so I should put it in the bin", something simple like that. I would think of it but now I'm "who gives a shit? It's not my money." Khanara

Detention was definitive in redefining Khanara's attachments and investment to her community. This raises serious issues about the capacities of individuals who have received poor treatment to feel part of a society which excluded and demoralised them once granted positive status.

Home and belonging are conceptualised not just as the meeting point between place and space but within and through time (Rapport and Dawson, 1998; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; King and Christou, 2008; Binaisa, 2011). Crucially, uncertain legal status contrived indeterminable periods of temporariness and impermanence which fuelled uncertainty, ambiguity and liminality (Douglas, 2010), key characteristics of precarity. The impermanence born from Bella's identity as an FNO affected her sense of belonging and her broader outlook on life;

"My feeling now is temporary, it's not permanent. I'm just staying for now. [...] Nothing is permanent that's why in life exactly you're still going to have a margin of error. Nothing's going to be perfect [...] nothing's forever. I'm talking about the feeling now because I'm here now, stuck." Bella

Bella and Khanara's sentiments were not however representative of the majority of respondents, most of which were committed to the UK. Despite the hardships of their precarious lives several sought to 'make the best' of their situations by adapting. While Janet felt detached from her immediate London community, of the UK, more broadly she observed;

"I feel it's my home because I'm afraid to go back to that place [Nigeria]." Janet

The impermanence and uncertainty of Janet's situation was mitigated by opportunities for personal safety;

"I lived in poverty, my husband was so poor, even my children we can't eat three square meals a day [...] When those people brought me I thought maybe if I had money to pay them maybe I would be going to Nigeria [...] but I don't have money to pay them. I can't just go back there because if I go there my life is not safe because those people they might kill me [...] So now I'm in this place, I feel safe, I like this place. I don't like how they keep me, how they keep me and how I'm living, I don't like that." Janet

Despite the challenges, Janet's life in the UK was relatively improved given the contemporary threat from her traffickers; her vulnerability to this gang had reframed her relationship with her understanding of home. Janet distinguishes between having a safe (if temporary) refuge and the compromises she was willing (or forced) to make in order to secure her basic safety.

While home was central to the perpetuation of precarity the physical dwelling was not always crucial to feeling 'at home'. This is not to say physical dwellings were insignificant only that some participants proffered more complex and nuanced definitions of place. This was most notable for respondents living with others (mostly refused and destitute asylum-seekers) who often communicated the greatest sense of belonging and entitlement to remain;

"Nottingham [is my home]. I can't say this house, it's not my house but I call Nottingham home. That's where my family has lived all these years so Nottingham is my home without a home. A home without a home." Laura

Although she lacked her own physical dwelling, the East Midlands city in which Laura lived was home. While she had lived in the city for nine years, her family had been settled there for some time which served as a historical legacy that tied Laura to the city. This association legitimised her sense of place and engendered feelings of 'place-belongingness' (hooks, 2009; Antonsich, 2010).

Tulisa expressed the most affirmative sense of belonging despite being a refused asylum-seeker who had moved frequently between different cities. Underpinning this was her faith in God;

"Yes, of course I belong in the UK. I think I'm one of the British in the UK. I have the faith [...] Prison my God took me out, detention my God took me out. So until now my God is still keeping me, it means God wants me to stay in this country [...] I have that faith this country is my country." Tulisa

Tulisa's faith and determination was juxtaposed against her precarious, destitute existence which suggests that belongingness is not reserved to those whom society recognises nor does uncertain status necessarily undermine this. Citizenship is described as a mechanism employed by nation-states to manage migrant flow (Gilmartin, 2008). Indeed, Cresswell (2006: 161) argues that "citizens require the production of others to be possible, and the definition of citizen carries around the noncitizen or the shadow citizen as part of its constitution". Others assert that belonging cannot just

be about migrants' 'feeling at home' but is contingent upon the hegemonic minority who dictates who belongs and how this is spatially realised (Castles and Davidson, 2000; Ilcan, 2002; Valentine et al., 2009; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Tulisa however highlighted the potential for contestation, resonating with Brah's provoking question; "When does a location become home? What is the difference between 'feeling at home' and staking claim to a place as one's own?" (Brah, 1996: 193). Echoing Tulisa, Binasisa (2011: 18) finds conceptual potential in liminality and argues that the seeds of belonging may still find sustenance within a barren and precarious land (Grillo, 2007).

This section has identified that accounts of belonging were caught up and largely undermined by uncertain immigration status and detention, though not in all cases. Furthering the discussion in Chapter Four on the infantilisation of detention, the next section acknowledges how this endured beyond release, casting the state in a paternalistic role. I unpack how uncertain and deviant identities such as those discussed above legitimised the exercise of state control, demanding the adoption and negotiation of gendered identities with further consequences for respondents' sense of belonging.

### 6.3 *State as parent*

"Oh it would be great to live here with my husband. It'd be like total married couple. But for now it's like little kids just running around, hiding from the parents you know like they're in a relationship, just meeting in a corner, have a little snog and just go away!" Khanara

Many women experienced the state as paternalistic beyond release which compounded the infantilisation they underwent whilst in detention, foregrounded by an infantilised/demonised dichotomy which women experienced as punitive treatment (Marmo and Smith, 2012). Because refugee status afforded greater certainty, (refused) asylum-seekers and Bella as an FNO felt at greatest risk of retribution<sup>36</sup>, particularly the state's capacity to infiltrate everyday lives and impose punitive measures. While compliance was recognised as necessary, it did not ensure impunity;

"You need to comply with the rules, with their rules, to be safe. And even if you comply that's nothing. It has happened to us, to so many people. You comply but you end up in detention." Jennifer

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<sup>36</sup> This is not to say that 'positive' statuses are unproblematic, indeed are known to be embroiled in other intersecting identity politics (Gedalof 2007; Szczepanikova 2010).

The unpredictability of state decision-making and capacities to 'punish' non-compliance was exemplified through the spectre of detention. This featured heavily in respondents' imaginaries and shaped decision-making;

"I don't really want to put myself in trouble anymore like you know, going to different work looking for papers to work. I don't really want to, I don't want to push it [...] I just want to stay like this 'cos I at the end of the day, you work and they'll come one day for you [...] I don't want to 'cos they're doing things to people right now." Tulisa

The state's power to 'come for her' occupied an omnipotent presence in Tulisa's everyday imaginary which deterred her from risk-taking despite her destitution.

Many other state interventions perceived as patriarchal were related to the home, some of which have been acknowledged in previous chapters, including evictions from NASS accommodation, electronic tagging, curfews, inadequate subsistence and the placement of children into state care. For a minority of respondents another patriarchal intervention was interference with marriage and intimate relationships, with the state dictating where and with whom women lived, resulting in the spatial (and therefore emotional) separation from loved ones. Reasons for separation included dispersal, administrative errors and NASS accommodation. Separation enhanced a sense of powerlessness, frustration and loneliness and interfered with support networks. The Home Office's bureaucratic failings had significantly delayed Jennifer's marriage to her British partner, a matrimony which promised her citizenship and a shared, family home. This delay had disrupted her gendered identities and opportunities to discard unfavourable identities, literally interfering with 'making home'. Khanara experienced significant disruption to her wedding day;

"We were sitting in the registry office trying to register ourselves with the rings on one kind of pillow there and we were just talking to the registrar and [...] these fifteen officers all of a sudden comes in and said "ok you're in one room, you're in one room" take us apart and ask us different questions like "ok what's your partner's name? When was he born? [...] You know simple questions, "what's the colour of his phone?" Khanara

The UKBA's interrogation disrupted Khanara's wedding day and her memories of it forever. It conveyed a powerful message about the state's capacity to intervene in the most intimate of moments, epitomising its patriarchal influence. Khanara spoke bitterly of returning to NASS accommodation after the wedding, spending her first night of married life separately from her

husband. This constituted the state's most invasive interference of Khanara's intimate relationships, denying her the rights of a married woman and reducing her to a child; sent to bed early and alone. This sentiment is reinforced in Khanara's quote at the beginning of this section.

The impact of the state's real and imagined interventions was described as an on-going erosion of participants' freedom, choice and autonomy, reduced in some cases to the position of a child;

"It's like grooming, you have a child and you continue spoon feeding. We are not used to spoon feeding in my culture." Ella

Pru also described state intervention as explicitly infantilising;

"It is like when you have a kid and you don't want her to touch that thing. She or he cannot learn to walk quickly because you are not giving her freedom to walk freely, there is nothing that she can learn to do when you are not allowing the baby to crawl everywhere they want. [...] Parents somehow should get sympathy for their kid and say "okay, you go and crawl" but this one you cannot. It is more like a prison as well, you are like in the house – they call it house arrest, like that." Pru

Not only does Pru compare herself to a child, she describes her negotiations with the state within the lexicon of parenthood. Pru's loss of liberty saw her adult, gendered identities disrupted, exacerbated by the transformation of home into a place of confinement, not unlike detention. Other participants corroborated gender stereotypes which portrayed women as weak and less able to cope with patriarchal oppression. Indeed, cultural and racial stereotypes converged with and disrupted straightforward gendered identities. Khanara described the stereotypical 'oriental woman' which she used (and sought to reject) as a cultural marker for herself, in contrast to society's perception of the 'African woman';

"They're really like skinny and pale faced, you know their fingers are very fragile and their voices are like "hello" [*imitates a soft, high pitched tone*]. They think they can just bully them, just say whatever you want to say. But with African woman you wouldn't say would you? You wouldn't say "oh you're like that" You'd be scared! 'Cos African women are really great, they can just slap you on your head once and that's done!" Khanara

While the 'oriental woman' connoted fragility and weakness which she felt attracted bullying behaviour, Khanara perceived the 'African woman' as embodying strength and authority. This suggests that for Khanara her infantilisation was exacerbated through her cultural and racial identity.

This section has explored how some participants experienced parts of their lives beyond detention as infantilising, born in the main from everyday state interventions and legitimised by uncertain legal status. The next section unpacks the (re)construction of gendered identities through disruptions to the gendered life course further underscoring home within these accounts.

#### *6.4 Disruption to the gendered life course*

"It is on hold but for how long? For six years? When you restart, if one day you restart it won't be the same never, ever. It will never be the same, you can't bring back these six years of your life, you can't. You're getting older, you lose your confidence every day, your mental health [...] You move on but not the same person who came here six years ago." Berdour

Eastmond (2007: 255) asserts that creating a sense of belonging and 'home' requires constructing a coherent narrative of self. Accounts of home were often defined by the absence of children or family, restrictions on living with husbands or partners, and protracted disruptions to the gendered life course. The disrupted gendered identities of mother or wife usually embroiled with home unsettled women's ability to articulate a narrative of self, equally disrupting capacities to feel 'at home'. Protracted disruptions to the life course were born from displacement and everyday precarity in the UK. This demanded a constant and not altogether successful re-negotiation of self, unsettled by the stigma of 'ex-detainee' which infused everyday embodied and emotional geographies. Berdour's six inconclusive years seeking asylum had wrought significant damage on her aspirations and sense of achievement.

"When I came here I wanted [to have children] but now I don't know really. Sometimes even it seems this is the end of my life, so no husband, no kids, no family life that's it, even no career. I have nothing really." Berdour

At the age of 38 years Berdour felt her life was over, identifying a disjuncture between her imagined future and her lived reality. In lacking a husband, child and job, Berdour's life was without meaning and felt insubstantial. In the quote at the beginning of this section, Berdour identifies how indefinite

uncertainty was entwined with having failed to fulfil key culturally expected achievements. This highlights the co-contingent nature of prolonged uncertainty, disrupted gendered and age-specific identities and mental health and how this convergence had altered Berdour irrevocably. Crucially, while Berdour felt 'out of place' in the UK she also feared returning to Sudan, given her perceived failure to construct an acceptable narrative of self.

Children were a key preoccupation, either in their absence or because interruptions to lifecycle stages had prevented women from conceiving. The disruptions to conception were attributed to troubled relationships with men, health problems (particularly gynaecological) or like Berdour, aging and a sense of time running out.

"I'm 34, I was born in '77. I want to have children but time is going isn't it? I want to have my child." Tulisa

The rupture to family networks through flight had consequences for belonging and identity. Five women had left children behind, a decision that was never taken lightly and highlighted their desperate circumstances. While many were reluctant to speak directly of their separation, their silence on the subject reinforced the absence of their children and highlighted the deep loss this fissure evoked. In one exception Janet spoke of her loss;

"I missed my children, I missed many things about my life, you see? So I feel bad about that because I still love them, I stayed too long, I didn't know where about my children were, two of them are dead. Maybe if this hadn't happened they wouldn't have died, if they hadn't trafficked me maybe I would still be with my children." Janet

Janet's prolonged separation was caused by the cumulative impact of being trafficked and held captive by her traffickers, being detained and then several long years negotiating the asylum system. This caused great guilt and loss. Janet's grief at being unable to protect her children was shared by other respondents who had left children behind and so were unable to 'mother' them. Research by Miranda et al (2005) suggests that Latina immigrant mothers who left their children with relatives had an increased risk of depression. This has striking implications for women like my participants who not only left their children behind but did so without much (or any) warning and in some cases lost contact with them. Jana spoke of her separation from her three children before being reunited after several years apart;

“Before they came every time I would start eating I would feel “have my children eaten?” and at times I would fail to eat. And the fact that they call you, I last heard of the word mum [...] hearing that word again, it was, it is like “my God!” it’s like I never heard it. And seeing them, I saw them as adults ‘cos I used to walk on the street and I would look at teenagers and I would imagine, is my son this age now? Or is my daughter this age now?” Jana

Jana’s everyday consciousness was disrupted by her separation from her children, with fundamental quotidian activities such as eating inducing painful memories and emotion, particularly guilt (Douglas, 2010). Auto-biographical features such as family activities relating to a past history are essential to belonging and evoking past homes (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000; Duruz, 2002). Eating chimes evocatively with maternal, nurturing instincts which Jana had been unable to realise. Their eventual reunification had facilitated the rediscovery of Jana’s identity as a mother which was (re)enacted through performative scripts constructed through the home, augmenting a sense of belonging. Despite unhomey, cramped accommodation Jana had begun a new life by building upon her familial legacies;

“It’s a sort of long process really. They say home is where your heart is. I believe Camden will be my home [...] if I get a place and I can see they’re [her children] happy, they’re studying, of course Camden is my home, Camden is my home. I’ve got a wonderful support group, I’ve made friends in Camden I wouldn’t ask for anything more, I’ve got my children with me I couldn’t ask for anything more.” Jana

Jana’s use of present and future tenses is revealing as it suggests a temporal and relative nature to her experience of belonging, and an unmet potential. While granted refugee status some time before being reunited, Jana still lived in a temporary homeless hostel while awaiting rehousing. Despite Jana’s sense of belonging to her local social network, this potential could have been enhanced further through more permanent housing arrangements and adequate schooling. This acknowledges a common misconception held by many asylum-seekers that refugee status would signal an immediate shift towards greater stability and certainty (Douglas, 2010), corroborated also by the charity workers interviewed.

Proponents investigating transnational family separation identify that maintaining contact with children and reconfiguring parenthood may help migrants attempt to (re)create new bonds across space (Zentgraf and Chinchilla, 2012). This was not a prospect available to all my respondents as

some were unsure of their children's location which fuelled generalised precarity. Pru had remained permanently separated from her children and was unsure if they were alive;

“When you have left your kids back home there is no way you can be a mum [...] that freedom for a woman is taken away, from your children or from your husband or from being a woman. It's really like, yeah it is taking away your freedom as a woman.” Pru

Poignantly, her separation from children (and husband) had stripped away Pru's identity both as a mother and a woman. For Laura, her other gendered identities had been displaced through the undesirable, dominant positionality of 'ex-detained refused asylum-seeker' and her destitution;

“We are old people, we have children, we have responsibilities [...] how are you are going to manage to continue living and somebody calling you “grandma give me this or that”, what am I going to give them?” Laura

This highlights the intergenerational nature of identity construction and the transnational implications of everyday restrictions. Laura's destitution was perceived as a barrier to her adequate fulfilment of the role of grandmother, manifesting in inadequacy, shame and eroded self-efficacy. This was not only true of asylum-seekers; as an FNO Bella's ability to adequately fulfil the performative script of mother was equally disrupted by being on electronic tag;

“You don't have your liberty you cannot do whatever you want, at night I cannot travel I cannot assist my daughter even parent's evening [...] I'd love to attend some of the activities see what she's doing and not only that it's also affecting my children, seeing me at home not working, not doing anything.” Bella

In contrast, Haben had married an Eritrean man in the UK and had a child to positive effect;

“I like my baby so much really, I love him, he change my life. I'm busy person with him you know? [...] Before I'm stress, always he keep me busy, he play with me so I'm really happy.” Haben

At the age of 19 Haben had discovered new identities of wife and mother which provided her with purpose and meaning. This facilitated her social inclusion and 'feeling at home', improving her wellbeing by providing the welcome daily commotion of motherhood.

Identity construction through normative gendered life courses across most cultures are achieved through intimate relationships, most commonly formalised through marriage. The majority of informants were single, and those that were in relationships found their abilities to fulfil identities of wives or partners inhibited not least by the state interventions. Mya highlighted how pressures in the UK differed to those that a peaceful life in Uganda would have posed;

"I would have got married already, because once you have finished your university degree in Uganda people are looking at you, they are expecting you to get married. I would even have two kids but because of the lifestyle here I have to get a job, you have to work and get established, you can't just give up like that." Mya

Mya underscores the different cultural perceptions of 'success' which posed fresh challenges and impacted upon gendered identities. For Noreen and Jennifer, this newfound awareness precipitated dissatisfaction with the oppressive nature of traditional identities which demanded subservience and had increased their vulnerability. This included the (dutiful) daughter, mother and 'housewife';

"I can't go live alone in Pakistan. I can't go live alone because our culture is very, very different like than in this culture, because I like this culture now [...] as a woman you can go alone. We can do work. [...] If we are Pakistan if we are in the country we are housewife."

Noreen

Noreen's time in the UK had seen her challenge traditional gender roles to which she had historically adhered and which had seen her subjected to domestic abuse by her father and two ex-husbands. Similarly, by escaping to the UK Rupinder had assumed the identity of wife from a love marriage (not an arranged marriage as was culturally expected). These experiences echo work on the resettlement of immigrant women in host communities which highlight the triumphs afforded by migration. This comprises encounters with more inclusive sets of women's rights which facilitate meaningful and satisfying narratives of self (Crosby, 2008).

For many participants then, an accumulation of factors disrupted their normative life courses and gendered identities. In many cases the uncertainty of respondents' lives was mirrored in their precarious dwellings. This included the inadequacies and 'unhomeliness' of domestic dwellings amplified by the separation from and absence of children, and state interventions. In the next section I unpack work(lessness) as a critical feature of respondents' everyday lives which was inextricable from accounts of belonging and identity.

#### 6.5 *Work(lessness): 'You cannot reap if you have not sown'*

"You cannot reap if you have not sown, I can't keep begging, begging, begging. It's really very hard to be lazy when you can work and then you wait for someone to give you money."

Ella

Douglas (2010: 239) observes that "life as an asylum-seeker is defined mainly by what one cannot do", indeed inactivity and work(lessness) was identified by all respondents. Legal restrictions prohibiting asylum-seekers from paid work perpetuated dependency and poverty and had significant consequences for accounts of belonging, identity and wellbeing<sup>37</sup>. Government's work-related restrictions are perceived as instrumental to broader policies of deterrence (Stewart, 2005). Asylum-seekers' rights to work in the UK were revoked in 2002 and while legislative changes in 2005 conceded that individuals waiting over 12 months for an initial Home Office decision could apply to work, this concession is largely irrelevant as the majority of decisions are usually made within a year. Moreover, as my respondents and the charity workers interviewed attested, initial decisions only precipitates further protracted asylum processes of appeals or decisions on 'fresh claims' which often exceeds this timeframe, during which the applicant is ineligible to work. Asylum-seekers who have exhausted the appeals process and who are receiving Section 4 support are also ineligible to work, even if the government acknowledges return in the short-term is impossible. This also applies to refused asylum-seekers and FNOs. The lived reality was inactivity, multiple deprivation, eroded wellbeing and social exclusion (McColl et al., 2008; O'Sullivan and Gower, 2009).

Those who had lived independently before being detained had typically begun with domestic work in the houses of acquaintances but being relatively inconsistent sources of income, false documents were later sought which facilitated employment in new semi-formal settings such as food

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<sup>37</sup> This was equally the case for Bella as a Foreign National Offender.

preparation warehouses and cleaning contractors. Tulisa and Ella had worked for care agencies either in care homes or as live-in carers. Both reported successful working lives, confirmed by their managers who had offered glowing references in support of their asylum applications.

“[I used to work] with old people or people with mental health. I loved the job, that’s what I really want to do in my future. I did my job with all my heart I worked there with diligence, I worked there, I had no complaint for the years I was there, I was working there and I was made senior [...] until immigration came for me and they took me to the prison”. Tulisa

Ella’s proficiency in English had been particularly useful, in fact she had turned down promotions for fear of being identified. Despite using stolen National Insurance details Ella had also made significant tax contributions which had been considered positively in her legal trial. Unlike Ella, not all participants were fully aware of the illegality of their actions and were immersed in day-to-day survival. Work served a number of purposes;

“I [was] going door-to-door doing cleaning or cooking or reading Holy Korans only. Yeah, and they give me money. They give me money like £5 an hour. And I was happy because I can spend time not only in my friend house, she have some privacy. And I said, alright, and she can give me this work and I can give my solicitor money.” Noreen

Informal domestic work enabled Noreen to pay her solicitors’ fees and claim for asylum whilst mitigating the challenges of living in someone else’s home. Others working illegally like Janet found themselves prey to exploitative employers who demanded transactional sex (Keygnaert et al., 2008). Only when Janet had earned enough money to pay for her own room did she escape this exploitation.

After release from detention not one participant had returned to working illegally, even those who had exhausted all appeals and were destitute. This departs from work by McGregor (2008) which highlights that for Zimbabwean refused asylum-seekers, abjection did not necessarily mean succumbing to destitution as some continued working illegally and sustained their families. For my participants, the risk of being redetained and deported was too great. While respondents who were (refused) asylum-seekers idealised securing positive status for the associated right to work the reality was often harsh. Mya had been granted refugee status and was desperate to work but remained unemployed, perpetuating her experience of poverty and inappropriate accommodation;

“If I find a job I can leave and find a better place I want to live in but because I don’t have a job, finding a job is hard [...] So I keep on struggling with life until we find a job you want.”

Mya

Mya indicates a shift in focus from pursuing immigration status to employment. Undoubtedly then work played a central role in how the imagined future was constructed;

“It’s a whole picture you know. A house, a dignified house, a home, a family, kids, a career, it’s a whole picture. It’s an ideal life.” Berdour

For Berdour, work was one component part of successful future but significantly felt all of these factors were withheld from her as an asylum-seeker. This denied her the opportunity to invest in satisfying, meaningful identities and build home.

Ella’s quote at the beginning of this section expresses a sentiment shared by many participants; a reluctance to take from society without giving back. Many were all too aware that their dependency on state welfare only fortified public stereotypes of asylum-seekers as leeches on public resources (Sales, 2002), and vehemently contested the notion that they were scroungers or out to exploit the system.

“[I] wish the outer world know more about women who come here. They don’t come here for a jaunt, they want to do something to help themselves and their family. It’s actually poverty which pushes women too much [...] we wanted to help, we don’t want to sit down and be begging or be complaining, crying, we want to go out there and work, we didn’t come here just to get free monies.” Laura

Proponents concur that aside from the economic benefits and purchasing power that working affords, being economically integrated engenders a sense of place-belongingness (Antonsich, 2010, Chow, 2007, Threadgold et al., 2008). Economic investment supersedes the material and influences the subjective stake the individual feels they have in the future of the place in which they live (Jayaweera and Choudhury, 2008; Valentine et al., 2009). Over half of participants were engaged in voluntary work which highlights that the potential to invest in a community through work is not only dependent on economic gain but a willingness to participate in and contribute to the future of shared communities. Although Mary and Jana had been granted refugee status, the cumulative

impact of their past experiences saw them unable to work because of poor physical and mental health. Nevertheless both were actively involved in voluntary work with charities in their respective cities. The need to 'repay' a debt of support was a strong motivation;

"I'm doing voluntary at the moment yeah but I need really to just go and work in the hospital, I need to help other people because I need to give back what people have given to me." Mary

"The medication is free, that's why I do a lot of voluntary work, its a way of thanking. I do a lot of voluntary work." Laura

Despite what she perceived as poor treatment by the state, Laura felt indebted to UK society for the extensive healthcare she had received. The opportunities denied to Laura to pay back the support she had received disempowered her further and exacerbated her sense of inactivity, leaving her with feelings of shame and diminished self-efficacy. Hunt (2008: 287) notes that voluntary work enables those with uncertain immigration status to counteract the loss of social status and reciprocate the help received through a 'generalised reciprocity'. Voluntary work also supplemented material resources such as travel expenses and clothing items. There was, however, a hierarchy in voluntary positions available to asylum-seekers. Amelia's efforts to employ her extensive experience of autism and fluency in braille in a local hospital had been rejected because of her immigration status, which conveyed that she was not trusted with vulnerable people. Despite Amelia's heavy involvement with the church, this was inadequate in filling her time;

"The terrible thing is the weekend. Weekends are so boring, very boring. I have nothing to do, not until Saturday evening when I have to go and prepare for Sunday mass, but also that takes me about an hour or at most two hours and after that I am not going out. Sunday I will go and attend the ten o'clock mass, I will come back here by half eleven I am here and I am going to be on my own from eleven until Monday when I go back. It is not easy". Amelia

While voluntary work is beneficial, it does not relieve financial dependency nor always enable highly skilled migrants to fully utilise their skills and expertise (Sebohm, 2008).

"We don't want to beg, we don't want free money, we want to do something. I have done a lot of volunteering myself [...] but for how long are you going to volunteer when you don't

have food in your tummy?” Laura

A striking number of participants had ambitions to work in the UK’s public sector, notably in caring professions with vulnerable populations, and several had existing health and social care qualifications;

“You know when I was in my country, I mean my life before the problem, it was comfortable really. I was living with my family in our own house, I had my own car, I had my own salary, I spent money on my family, like an independent woman. And suddenly you find yourself here without any condition, living in one room with four, five girls, you don’t have money even for essential things [...] all these six years a gap on my CV it’s not good for me, I’m not practicing. It’s a big, big challenge really to work again as a doctor. Even I start to lose my confidence whether I can be a doctor again or not.” Berdour

Berdour’s change in legal and social status was caught up with her loss of professional identity. The extended period as an asylum-seeker had damaged her career prospects and the security of her future, resulting in an unfamiliar feeling of dependency and poor confidence. Unsurprisingly then, just as work was inseparable from identity, worklessness held negative connotations and triggered discourses of being able bodied or ‘not disabled’;

“I’m not physically disabled, I’m not mentally disabled I have all my faculties despite the fact I’ve been diabetic, why should I stay home? Not be able to work, I’ve been living on £35 it’s for me to go and commit suicide, I had a lifestyle before.” Bella

Bella infers that worklessness had rendered her ‘disabled’, reinforcing the detrimental effects of inactivity on self-perception and identity. Bella's narrative of ‘staying home’ is important as it associates inactivity with being limited to the home, incarcerated through electronic tagging and imposed curfew.

For most respondents therefore, prolonged occupational restrictions caused great frustration and despair (Palmer and Ward, 2007) tied to subordinate identities such as ‘beggar’;

“I want to become something in the future, I don’t want to sit like this, I don’t want to be begging for charity money, I’m not here for charity money I want to work for my own

money, invest and make something big. Back there, make my own name.” Tulisa

When imagining the future, Noreen’s desired identity was imbricated with ambitions to work in security and the opportunities this would subjectively allow to reclaim control;

“I like security. I like nice clothes. Uniform, good uniform and badge, I see woman and she put badge here and they put like that and they have power they can do whatever they want. [...] My one friend, she said, “OK we going one [night] club can you go with me”. I said, “what is club? What is this?” She said, “very nice place you can come with me”. [...] I am going and I said “oh this is club, my God, very nice!” And 3, 4 girls, they fighting each other [...] she was coming, security woman, and you know that girl she was slapping her she took like that and she threw her outside and she said “you misbehave yourself what you doing?” And after I say I want to do security job.” Noreen

Noreen’s account reveals a grappling with new identities, status and power. Her identification with the woman security guard in a powerful position had opened her eyes to the power that this professional identity might also allow her. This is not surprising given Noreen’s experience of violence, abuse and subjugation by two abusive husbands, a male detention staff member and through the state’s interventions. This particular identity was strengthened through the visual cues of the security guard’s uniform and badge which for Noreen was imbued with power.

Building upon the discussion in this chapter so far, this section has unpacked the significance of work(lessness) for respondents’ accounts of belonging and identity. The final section picks up the significance of the country of origin and examines how this featured within projections of imagined futures and the significance for belonging, home and identity.

#### *6.6 Imagined futures of the ‘homeland’*

“When we remember our soul, we remember our elders. We remember our blood, we remember our enemies at the same time. We have too much loss there. We remember our school life, college life, mother life we remember our other life. Everything is there.”  
Rupinder

The country of origin was significant to most participants not just within the context of flight and past homes but how they perceived their futures. There is consensus that migrants’ perceptions of

the homeland is complex and conflicted, holding deep symbolic importance within personal narratives, underpinning homemaking practices and remaining crucial in the (re)construction of identity (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). The conscious loss of home with all its material, sentimental and psychological values creates a fundamental “deep sense of a gap, a fissure, a hole, an absence, a lack of confidence in one’s own existence and consequently in “reading life” which leads to a particular kind of frozenness” (Papadopoulos, 2002: 18). Because several women had fled some kind of suffering, returning home in the short-term was not desirable yet the possibility of return featured heavily in their imagined futures.

Rupinder quoted at the beginning of this section expressed conflicted attachments to her homeland, rooted in personal history and familial and ancestral connections. Interestingly the losses experienced there were not reasons to stay away but indicators of rootedness and attachment, constructed through good and bad associations. Jennifer also expressed conflicted attachments; when asked if marriage would change her feeling towards her place in the UK she replied;

Jennifer: “Sometimes I feel happy but still, I’m not. I’m one leg here one leg somewhere else.”

Menah: “That’s interesting you say that. So if one leg is here, where is the other leg?”

Jennifer: “Back home and then you just try to remember. Like now that I don’t have anything left. ‘Cos I don’t have parents like that because of the war and everything. That’s the only problem.”

Jennifer’s on-going emotional attachment to her country of origin undermined her belonging to the UK, yet she also acknowledged that the home in Somalia she knew and yearned for no longer existed. Scholars note that migrants often experience a hyphenated subjectivity by being ‘caught between two worlds’ precipitated by inhabiting an in-between, inter-cultural space which asserts identification as multiple and partial (Gilroy, 1993; Bhabha, 1994; Walsh, 2006: 125). Jennifer’s imagined future was defined therefore by an enduring negotiation of loss and disrupted belonging both to the UK and her home country. While loss, grief and mourning are implicit to migration, this loss is understood to be more ambiguous than the loss one feels following death, as it disrupts relationships with time and place (Falicov, 2007). This remains most true of relationships with home because of its multiple registers. Jennifer’s connection to Somalia endured if only through her imagined return and the uncertainty of her children’s fate, rendering her grieving ambiguous and incomplete and disrupting efforts to build a new life with her British partner.

Interfering with the real and imagined relationships with the homeland was extended separation over time and space. Noreen's 12 years away from Pakistan had left her doubting her own memories, forcing her to seek alternative representations;

"12 years is a long time. Before 10 years I knows Pakistan, I knows everything. Now, when I was in detention centre, now I came out, I forgot. [...] I don't know which, like, Pakistan now is dirty or same? When I am thinking too much then I know Pakistan is not good, you know Pakistani people they are crazy. You maybe heard from the news they have rape and they are using guns, they killing everyone, very, very bad now. When I heard from in news and I feel bad, Pakistani people are not good." Noreen

In the absence of new memories of her own, Noreen's point of reference had become the UK media through which she had assumed negative stereotypes and formed generalised assessments of 'Pakistani people'. This is insightful of Noreen's own identity construction as it reveals her disassociation from these 'Pakistani Others'. As well as disrupting her identity, Noreen's time away had also subverted her perception of Pakistan as home.

Berdour highlighted the passage of time as an influencing factor in her relationship with and perception of her home country;

"I feel I change. Even if I go back I can't live a normal life in my country [...] In these six years I've changed really and I think everyone being away from home and being through this kind of experience has changed. I can't live a normal life I can't be that Berdour that left six years ago back home, Sudan, I can't. [...] You feel like an alien within your own community, you know with your own people." Berdour

Berdour speaks powerfully of disrupted identities and sense of belonging brought about through extended separation. Staeheli and Nagel (2006: 1599) observe that "in leaving home, immigrants must make a new home, and they must negotiate the contradictions of both homes, even as they may feel they belong to neither". Berdour's self-identification as an 'alien' is poignant as she felt estranged from the UK and caught in a liminal state of belonging. Given the extensive changes to the political, social, economic and physical landscape of Sudan over the past decade (Grawert, 2010) Berdour's emphasis on the changes to her own personal geographies is revealing. The emphasis on these internal changes caused by temporal and spatial separation had the effect of 'fixing' a certain

imaginary of Sudan which no longer existed. This nostalgic representation was to exacerbate personal difference and separation, indeed by definition nostalgia means to long for a past time that is essentially unreachable (Rubenstein, 2001). Blunt (2008) seeks to mobilise the liberatory potential of 'productive nostalgia' with potential to shape contemporary accounts of home and enhance wellbeing. Others observe that nostalgia as a 'social stressor' with negative implications for mental health (Noh and Avison, 1996). Berdour's nostalgia alienated her simultaneously from the UK and Sudan, undermining her sense of belonging and disrupting her identities.

Immigration status was heavily embroiled with real and imagined interactions with the homeland, including the stigma of detention and the role of 'sub-citizen'. Laura's experience of being detained had significantly disrupted her sense of belonging to Malawi;

"You know, detention is something else. They don't beat you, there is food, but the anxiety that I am here, I'm guilty, I'm not wanted and I don't know where to start when I go, where I am going. Where do I start from? How do I face by myself, my home, my original home where do I start everything when I have nothing, when you don't even have a blanket to carry home? So those feelings they are really painful and you feel you are already dead."

Laura

Detention had disrupted Laura's relationship with her 'original home', overshadowed by a criminal identity and destitution. The lives that participants had built in the UK also recast their pasts in new light and reframed how they construed their futures. Jennifer spoke again of living in 'two worlds';

"We have two worlds that's what I've realised. [...] Back home we think we, to us we are comfortable, we are happy. I was so happy and everything, but after I came here I realised [...] I used to live with my husband, with my parents but I thought it was okay. But when I came here, if it was, the way he used to shout me, the way he used to behave. That's like an abuse you know?" Jennifer

Similarly for Noreen discussed previously, the insights gleaned from life in the UK had reframed Jennifer's past life in Somalia and the one she could expect as inadequate. While the homeland remained 'home' in a nostalgic sense, many respondents had conflicted feelings about return which had disrupted their identities and sense of belonging to the country of origin.

### *6.7 Chapter conclusions*

This chapter has explored key themes of belonging and identity; how these were perceived and experienced beyond detention. A key theme has been uncertain legal status which had real-life implications not least the legitimisation of invasive state interventions which fuelled the everyday precarity. A focus on belonging and identity has reinforced the gendered nature of precarity, through infantilising, state intervention and disruptions to the gendered life course. While respondents certainly encountered numerous barriers in their endeavours to develop a 'place-belongingness' there were examples of how particular discourses were adopted to contest 'non-human', deviant positionalities and locate a place in the UK. This supports the assertion that while belonging and identity formation are inherently spatial and gendered, they are by no means static. This speaks to what we might call differential inclusion through which belonging and identity are negotiated and contested (Andrijasevic, 2009a).

While the contextual richness provided in this and the past two empirical chapters has helped paint a picture of the precarious lives that respondents lived in the UK, the next chapter delves further into the impact of this for their wellbeing.

There is no denying that asylum-seekers and refugees are often exposed to great suffering with consequences for their emotional and mental health but efforts to translate, measure and respond to this in Western terms remains problematic. In the first instance, medical categories of distress are not always relevant to individuals from diverse social, cultural, political and historical contexts. Moreover, while trauma experienced by some individuals forced to flee their country of origin might leave a mark on their emotional and mental health and wellbeing this cannot be said for all forced migrants (Marlowe, 2009). Aroche and Coello (2004) recognise two competing perspectives; one which supports the treatment of psychological trauma in order to facilitate recovery after conflict, and the other which views reductionist interventions as an extension of cultural imperialism. The former has been led by what Miller et al (2006) have coined a 'trauma focused psychiatric epidemiology' (TFPE) which they argue is underpinned by a biomedical approach to traumatology which seeks to identify universal and therefore generalisable patterns of distress across diverse contexts. Critics of TFPE argue that this reinforces a polemic perspective which positions 'indigenous' standpoints at odds with a biomedical stance on trauma. While Western psychological therapies are perceived as more holistic than purely biomedical perspectives which are seen to sever an implicit mind/body connection, others also understand 'therapeutic interventions' as a secondary colonisation (Drew et al., 2010).

Given that a Western psychopathological approach has the potential to neglect indigenous and culturally specific interpretations of distress and forms of healing, throughout this chapter I avoid using diagnostic categories and have adopted a deliberately expansive interpretation on emotional and mental wellbeing. This is facilitated by a primary focus on the accounts of respondents as a way of accessing their wellbeing and the factors which effected this (Marlowe, 2009). This complements and is supported by the underpinning feminist methodology and the narrative approach employed. Respondents reported a broad spectrum of mental and emotional health problems from sleep disturbance, self-harm, anxiety, depression, attempted suicide and, in a minority of cases, had been diagnosed with a severe mental illness. Beyond the reporting of symptoms, wellbeing was understood to be complex, with emotional, mental, social and physical dimensions intersecting with features of respondents' precarious lives. While I deal with the co-contingent nature of these dimensions, wellbeing was shown to have a particularly emotional component. As such the first section unpacks how the sources and drivers of precarity were revealed through respondents'

emotional geographies, in particular accounts of shame, humiliation and expressions of emotional distress, revealing something of the tenor of these women's everyday lives. In the second section I examine psycho-corporeal accounts and consider how the body was a vessel for communicating precarious narratives of wellbeing. While the role of detention is implicit throughout the chapter, the third section considers the explicit legacies and processes of detention and how this was translated through dimensions of wellbeing, including coping with everyday life, relating to others and how experiences of detention were conceptualised through a discourse of torture. In seeking to interrogate the consanguinities of precarity and wellbeing, the fourth section suggests that at the core lies a fundamental disruption to respondents' ontological security which above all disrupted their ability to carve out a life plan and envisage a trajectory into the future (Giddens, 1991). Developing these ideas, the chapter concludes by unpacking the key disruptions that respondents experienced to their gendered life courses and the impact of this for their imagined futures and as a consequence their wellbeing.

### 7.1 Emotional geographies of shame, humiliation and tears

"I'm crying with pain, weeping, afraid very much." Rupinder

As discussed elsewhere, the past two decades have seen the work of feminist geographers cutting a path through discursive representations of migration towards more inclusive lived accounts of marginalised groups which emphasise experiences of space. One key impetus has been the accentuation on emotional geographies with growing recognition that emotions hold the key to understanding experiences of place and space in new and untold ways (Anderson and Smith, 2001; Davidson and Bondi, 2004; Davidson et al., 2007; Pile, 2010). Respondents' narratives were infused with emotion at every stage from their experiences of flight, migratory journeys, time in detention and lives beyond, creating distinct emotional geographies. These were compounded by worklessness, poverty and deprivation and as a result confining women to often bleak, isolated and unhomely spaces in the absence of alternative occupation. This propagated negative emotions included frustration, sadness, disappointment, hopelessness, anger and in particular shame and humiliation which had an erosive impact on mental health (Silove et al., 1997; Bhugra, 2004; Warfa et al., 2006).

"You feel like you've done something bad and like criminal they stop you and put you in detention, even sometimes you feel shame about it really, I felt ashamed about it. Even to talk about it with my friends." Berdour

Like many respondents protracted periods as an asylum-seeker and the criminalisation of detention caused Berdour to internalise feelings of shame and humiliation which endured beyond release. Investigations of shame highlight its relational nature and how it may be triggered through interpersonal encounters or social or institutionalized practices (Jordan, 1997). For my respondents these triggers arose from numerous experiences including trafficking and sexual abuse, negotiations with the asylum system, detention and lives as sub-citizens within UK society. This had erosive psychosocial consequences not least damaging self-esteem and undermining interpersonal relations (Tangney and Dearing, 2003; Zaveleta, 2007). The relational nature is also revealed in the capacity of shame to “diminish[es] the empathic possibility within a relationship, cutting off the opportunity for the individuals engaged in the relationship to progress toward mutuality and authentic connection” (Hartling et al., 2000: 2). Not only were experiences of shame born from real and imagined relations with others, they undermined the formation of new connections and maintaining existing ones;

“You feel shame about yourself, you blame yourself those things. Those are the things which you know make people really go mental, and now if I go out there they’ll say to me back home, people will be laughing at me.” Laura

Laura’s account highlights the contingent nature of shame and self-blame with a deterioration of mental health described as ‘going mental’. This negative cycle was fuelled by a fear of further humiliation in the event of return to her home country, disrupting her sense of belonging and attachments to place. Kim (2010: 219) asserts that feelings associated with shame relate to three key areas; self-worth, personal achievement, and self-attitude. Laura’s feelings of shame were caused, indeed inflamed by, low self-worth and poor self-efficaciousness. This derived largely from what Friedli et al (2011: 29) define as ‘relational features of deprivation’ which have particular psychosocial implications such as “feeling humiliated by the lack of valued goods, being ashamed to appear in public and not being able to participate in the life of the community”. These authors suggest that the relative position one occupies within a given social hierarchy is inextricable from health and wellbeing as it “structures individual and collective experiences of dominance, hierarchy, isolation, support and inclusion” and which “influences constructs like identity and social status, which impact on well-being, for example, through the effects of low self-esteem, shame, disrespect and ‘invidious comparison’” (*ibid*). Laura’s emotional account illustrates her positioning within the UK’s social and political hierarchy, with her subordination traced through her emotional geographies and damaging her wellbeing. Khanara’s expressions of shame were equally revealing;

“[I feel] Worthless, ashamed. Just because I’m not English person you know I don’t have a voice to say whatever and even if I say they just don’t believe it because I’m not English. They have the power.” Khanara

Once again Khanara’s identity as a disempowered and voiceless non-English Other was manifested through her emotions, and compounded by her incarceration, deviant associations and subservient positioning in relation to the powerful majority. While detention was a source of shame and humiliation, these emotional burdens often endured beyond release. As Khanara explained, it was something that stayed with and within her;

“I can’t forget about what has happened. It’ll always be there with me it’s just a matter of time where I can just, you know, learn to live with it. You know at the moment it’s just like eating at me from every corner of my body, it’s just I can’t deal with it so I just need to tell everyone.” Khanara

French (1994: 69 cited in Dossa, 2003) notes that “[e]ven the most apparently subjective and personal of experiences - the experience of one's own body - is shaped in important ways by the relations of power and domination in which the body is involved.” Khanara’s account conveys how her experience of detention had become internalised and assimilated into her emotional and embodied geographies. Indeed, her difficulties in emotionally reconciling these experiences had resulted in a certain toxicity, expressed as a literal corrosion and consumption of her internal self with undeniably destructive consequences for her mental health.

While the on-going precarity of respondents’ lives resulted in emotional challenges, these were ameliorated in a minority of cases when circumstances changed such as being awarded permanent immigration status or making progress with asylum cases. In these events participants reported feelings of relief or reduced worry but these improvements were often short-lived, superseded by new anxieties about survival;

“I got news, you know, when I heard I approve my section 4 really I was very happy, [...] it’s good I got good news, and two days I am happy and after that I am same. Same, I have same situation, stress, thinking, when they call me? When I going? When I going take my own home? When I got my own house? When I can go buy my own shopping? [...] Just these things I am always thinking.” Noreen

Noreen highlights how her emotional wellbeing was undermined by uncertainty, a lack of control over her future and lack of freedom. It was not uncommon for positive emotions afforded from relatively significant gains like securing Section 4 support to get lost in broader narratives of desperation and hopelessness.

A significant feature of almost all respondents' accounts was how emotional suffering was described through accounts of crying and shedding of tears;

"I was crying all throughout when I was in prison, I was crying. I was not eating well, I can't eat, I was just crying. I would sleep with tears in my eyes until the next morning, crying, crying, begging for God to take me out." Tulisa

Research suggests that the expression of emotional distress is paradoxical as while it communicates negative feelings it can also act as a coping mechanism (Kennedy-Moore and Watson, 2001). That said, chronic expression of distress can also indicate more complex mental health problems and can interfere with coping strategies and disrupt interpersonal relationships (Tavris, 1989; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Trachsel et al (2010: 141) suggest that "the expression of emotion can generally be seen as a universally adaptive impulse that represents a link between internal experiences and the outside world". The centrality of the 'outside world' corroborates the inherently spatial specificity of several respondents' accounts of distress. Indeed, the reporting of emotional distress was at times spatially located as an apparent strategy to convey detrimental experiences of these places;

"That time, where I was, I could not see anybody I was near those deserted old factories, that had a very big impact on me. I used to cry, I would cry." Ella

Ella's response to the physical NASS accommodation located in a virtually empty building on the community's periphery was conveyed through her account of emotional distress. This was also the case for Janet who located her emotional distress within her NASS accommodation;

"Sometimes in my room, sometimes I think, think, be crying, I'll just be crying and thinking about the past [...] and when I come out they'll be saying "Janet your eyes, you've been crying"." Janet

Not only was Janet's expression of distress communicated through her self-location in her room within the NASS accommodation, it was given weight in relation to her social interaction with other residents of the property. Kennedy-Moore and Watson (2001) suggest that the intersubjective nature of emotional expression can offer opportunities to enhance wellbeing by reducing distress about distress, fostering personal insight, and securing necessary social support. The witnessing of Janet's distress by her fellow residents – or the embodied evidence of her eyes swollen from crying – was central to her description of this distress, how she conveyed the weight of her suffering and how she sought support at the time. Similarly, some respondents expressed the extent of their suffering through the metaphor of having cried all their tears;

“I had too much in my life. My life was really, I don't know. Like cry I can't cry no more. I cried, I cried all the tears I had in my life because by then I could not talk like this without really breaking down but now I think that I cry no more.” Pru

“People suffer, you know. People suffer. Jesus, that thing [detention] is full of corridors, long, long corridors and you take, people crying. Jesus me, you cry until you cry no more.” Mary

“My mind was not the same, I was too much cry in detention centre now my eyes finish because I don't have any water in my eyes.” Noreen

The prominence of crying as an expression of emotional distress was therefore significant in the processing and accounting of broader experiences. Given that emotional expression is perceived as a coping strategy which may enhance wellbeing through fostering self-acceptance and self-understanding these accounts indicate that respondents were attempting to reconcile past events both through the research encounter and through their interactions with others in everyday life (Kennedy-Moore and Watson, 2001; Friedli and Parsonage, 2009). That said, research also shows the expression of emotion, in particular crying, is more acceptable in some cultures than others and the extent to which it is considered justified will influence the benefits afforded to health and wellbeing, for example the release of pent up stress (Becht and Vingerhoets, 2002). Considering emotional expression through the body raises important issues about embodied geographies and the role that participants' bodies played in their accounting of wellbeing. I examine this in further detail in the next section.

## 7.2 The psycho-corporeal

The growing impact of the emotional turn on geography is perhaps matched in influence only by the more historically influential work on embodiment. Davidson and Milligan (2004) argue that the road carved out by proponents working at the body-as-scale opened the field to scholarship on emotions while conceding their interdependent nature. They argue that “[r]ecognition of the inherently emotional nature of embodiment has, thus, led many to the conclusion that we need to explore how we feel - as well as think - through ‘the body’ (523). Investigating the dynamic experiences of individuals through an emotional and embodied perspective, or as I have called it the ‘psycho-corporeal’, may assist in further unpacking respondents’ wellbeing.

Just as accounts of crying helped convey suffering, accounts of self-harming or suicidal attempts/feelings were equally instrumental in expressing the extent of emotional distress. This was a revealing use of the body to articulate the impact of hopeless situations;

“Sometime I fed up with asylum process because it is too long. I don’t know if they give us or not, and sometimes I feel like I want to cut my hand and I cut myself and hanging myself.”  
Rupinder

While the many psycho-corporeal features such as suicide attempts, panic attacks and weight loss/gain could be viewed purely as indicators of mental illness they were helpful in revealing the internalisation of repressive and debilitating features of daily lives. Dossa (2003: 13) considering Frank (1995: 2) observes that “the body is not mute, it is inarticulate” and “when the body is not medicalised (read individualised), it reveals societal fault lines”. The fault line that Dossa considers is the persistent marginalization of the Baha’i community from the nation-state of Iran, but this resonates with my respondents’ encounters with precarity in the UK and its manifestation throughout daily life as revealed through the body;

“[I have] Cut myself. Too ashamed I don’t, my scars have gone away you know I don’t know how many times I’ve done that [...] I’ve been cutting my skin not with knife but with rock, even dirty rock.” Khanara

Khanara attributed her self-harm to a deep sense of shame, frustration and powerlessness at her situation and an inability to reconcile this. In addition to intentions to inflict self-harm, some women

reported physiological symptoms that were not obviously tied to a physical disease or illness but indicated an internalisation of their stressful lives;

“I couldn’t even finish one apple because after I got depressed after knowing I was in prison [detention]. So I used to eat like half an apple and I just be sick of it. So what happened I lost, I lost the weight I had, the little weight I had ‘till my skin was, I don’t know, have you ever seen an old lady when their flesh, when their flesh is hanging?” Jennifer

“I had gotten the same problem before and they had said maybe it could be a gastric pain [...] when they did the scan and the x-ray they found everything was normal, the doctor is like “everything is normal, that mean it is stress. What are you worried about? You should avoid the stress”. But how do I avoid the stress in this condition? It is not that I want to get stressed, but I am stressed up.” Amelia

Research acknowledges the corrosive damage of triggering ‘fight/flight’ responses too often and for too long, which means that even low levels of stress recurring and enduring over extended periods of time can undermine physiological functioning (Ryff and Singer, 2002; Chandola et al., 2006; Steptoe, 2006; Friedli, 2009). Amelia developed a stress-related peptic stomach ulcer but the on-going stress of her situation and lack of control posed a continued threat to her health, fuelling a sense of powerlessness over her situation and her body (Anda et al., 1992). Other women reported numerous physical symptoms were also stress related;

“I can’t say I’m really, really okay because I’m having constant headache, I’m stressed, I’m depressed, I’m frustrated [...] I can’t walk so at the moment they gave me some painkillers.”  
Tulisa

“Doctor says you’re taking stress, that’s why. Sometimes I’ve got tummy pain, sometimes I’ve got legs pain and sometimes I feel I am disabled. You know I’ve got some many pains, my legs, my arms all times and always I want to lie down on my bed thinking, thinking. I want this life to finish.” Noreen

Tulisa and Noreen’s physiological symptoms were interlaced with their emotional and psychological distress, reinforcing an assemblage of mind and body. The conceptual disconnect between mind and within Western reductionist discourses is well recognised, originating from Cartesian dualism which

perceived the body as a “passive container which acts as a shell to the active mind” (Shilling, 1993: 26 cited in Hall, 2000). This separation has historical legacies dating back to the early centuries where the body became the domain of doctors and a site of investigation within medical dualistic discourses. Given this divisive tendency, physiological symptoms reported by individuals with psychological or emotional problems are likely perceived as attempts to conceal or suppress these difficulties (Watters, 2001). Beyond the West and across many other cultures however the connections between physiological and emotional/social problems are commonly accepted (Scheper-Hughes, 1993). This said, Noreen and Amelia’s experiences suggest that their doctors acknowledged the physiological consequences of stress, though reducing this stress remained unlikely given their circumstances.

Other physical symptoms were reported that occurred spontaneously during particularly stressful situations such as being in detention;

“Back then when I was in Yarl’s Wood I was, from January my legs were feeling really funny like jelly, it felt like tingly and feel like numb and I just couldn’t do no more and walk no more.” Khanara

Dossa (2003: 14), considering the work of Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993: 214), recognises that the body speaks a language of suffering, protest, defiance, and resistance through its symptomology and argues that we must choose how receptive we are to this. She warns against a silencing of these ‘screams of protest’ through medical interventions, endorsing instead the coaxing and witnessing of the body’s enunciations. Khanara’s frustration and helplessness in detention, arguably key causes of her physical deterioration and acquired immobility, were only exacerbated by being accused of ‘faking’ her very real symptoms, compounding her identity as a ‘bogus’, deviant, failed asylum-seeker.

Khanara’s experience of being disbelieved might also be precipitated by a differential expression of emotional and mental distress. The concept of somatisation has underscored the impact of culture in articulations of psychosocial distress and emotional problems through physical symptomatology (Katon et al., 1984: 208 cited in Keyes and Ryff, 2003). Within some cultures the expression of physical symptoms is an acceptable means of sublimating distressing feelings, whilst in others it is perceived as avoidance, involuntarily extending and exacerbating circumstances and distress (Vaillant, 1977; Wegner and Wenzlaff, 1996). These positive and negative potentialities are most

notably different between individualistic and collectivistic cultures such as in the UK and China respectively.

While the expression of emotional despair within 'tight', collectivistic cultures might be commonly and appropriately cloaked in a lexicon of bodily complaints, the value placed on directly and verbally expressing emotional despair in 'loose' individualistic cultures such as in the UK might thus interpret the complaint of physical symptoms as inappropriate and dysfunctional. This resonates with the discussion above about the Western, biomedical emphasis on Cartesian dualisms. There is a tendency within western, medically focused cultures to delineate between somatic symptoms and what are perceived as 'real' physical symptoms which have been medically validated by a doctor. The inference is that symptoms that remain inexplicable in relation to a diagnosable physical illness or disease are merely a fabric of the imagination or an indication of hypochondria. This is problematic not least because migrants are less likely to seek medical attention in the first instance and their expression of psychological distress through physiological symptoms might not be well received.

With the exception of three, all respondents in this study were from African countries which while no means homogenous, are most commonly underpinned by collectivist cultures which sees individuals feeling heavy moral obligation to family and community (Muriithi and Crawford, 2003). Mongolian cultural structures from which Khanara originated are also recognised as having an Asian collectivistic and family orientated culture, not unlike its bordering country of China (Reeves et al., 2012). Likewise, Noreen and Rupinder both came from Pakistan where the culture is also based on a collectivistic framework, expounded most insightfully from their own preoccupations with their families and sense of loyalty (Rudy and Grusec, 2006). In short, all respondents were rooted in collectivist cultures which is significant in considering their wellbeing and the imbrication of embodied and emotional accounts. While framing these accounts of physical symptoms purely within an idiom of somatisation is clearly inadequate, it does shed some light on the structural and institutional challenges encountered, infused with differing cultural interpretations. Watters (2001: 1713) asserts that "rather than impose a dualism which seeks to define whether the client has a physiological or a psychological problem, it may be more appropriate for clinicians to ask refugee patients for their own views regarding the etiology of their conditions". Adopting a holistic approach is relevant not only to clinicians but also to qualitative researchers, facilitating a (re)engagement with the body as an evocative access point to the lived experiences of individuals (Hall, 2000). This

corporeal shift thus embraces the body, contesting unproblematic binaries of mind/body and (re)acknowledging their imbrication (Parr, 1998).

Some participants reported a range of physical health problems that were distinct from the psychocorporeal symptoms outlined above yet had significant impact on wellbeing and quality of life. These were generally long-standing, including chronic illness and disease such as HIV, kidney disease, diabetes and gynaecological problems. There is a wealth of research which connects poor mental health with poor physical health (Brown et al., 2000; Phelan et al., 2001; Osborn et al., 2007). Friedli et al (2011: 23) for example indicate connections between feelings of despair, anger, frustration, hopelessness, low self-worth and physical health problems such as high blood pressure and susceptibility to infection. They also note that those who occupy lower socio-economic positions in society are more at risk of exacerbating factors. Like my participants, this included uncertain asylum claims, separation from and worries for children and loved ones, poverty and deprivation, and enforced inactivity. The convergence of these factors contrived a state of being which was highly stressful in the main because of its uncertainty.

Laura's emotional and mental health was further undermined by the challenges she faced in managing her multiple physical health problems, including a diagnosis of HIV and renal failure;

"It's very difficult because I can't suggest food, I don't have the buying power so whatever my friend buys I just eat, I can't complain much so that is also what is giving me trouble. That's why you see me even my eyes are itching, it means I have got a lot of phosphorous in me because of the foods which I am eating which I'm not supposed to eat but I have no option but to as if I don't eat I'll starve." Laura

Laura's inability to control her diet was a consequence of her status as a destitute, refused asylum-seeker living in the home of a friend. Laura's physical illness and limited mobility, geographical isolation, and poverty and deprivation converged to undermine her social inclusion. Furthermore, Laura's lack of daily autonomy was escalated by a fear of incarceration and deportation, given that her solicitor had been out of touch for 18 months;

"I don't want to think too much about that because with my condition when I think too much my kidneys go down so actually me I just live. Whether one day they'll come and pick me up I don't know what they want to do with me I don't know, because when I try to think

about it I don't sleep, and when I don't sleep I start hearing voices so I don't want to go mental again so I just leave it. I don't want to go mental again so I don't try to think about the solicitor, to think about immigration, I don't, I don't want to go ill again otherwise I'll cut my life short." Laura

Laura's precarious existence undermined her wellbeing, the societal 'fault lines' that Dossa speaks of etched onto her body and mind. This was exacerbated by her poor physical health, increasing a sense of helplessness and uncertainty which resulted in a fragile state of being.

A key connection drawn between emotional, mental and physical wellbeing was identified for a number of women through their gynaecological health problems and interferences with conceiving and bearing children. For Jennifer this included a miscarriage which she linked to past trauma and depression;

"I lost a pregnancy here with my boyfriend [...] even if you live here it's so hard because the trauma is still in me, the depression." Jennifer

Noreen also identified gynaecological problems which she correlated with her stressful lifestyle;

"When I came here I got period problems start. My period is coming very heavy, coming after two months and three months, two and half months, still bleeding until now. I have same problem." Noreen

In an especially extreme case Mary suffered eight years of chronic bleeding which led to her repeated hospitalisation and finally a hysterectomy. During this time she lived with an acquaintance and received no financial support from the UKBA, which left her destitute;

"I couldn't even sit two minutes without getting soaked. I don't know how to explain this. I was so much worried but I managed. It's only God who helped me through. So one morning I went to that hospital where I collapsed again in the house and then they called an ambulance I think that was the first time. [...] The bleeding increased and increased and I was indoors. I couldn't even go out. I couldn't even do much. I was lean and all that kind of stuff. Lean, yes, emaciated, small." Mary

Mary's experience was particularly shocking because she endured the bleeding for so long and only received attention once her health was critical. The significant delay in receiving help was caused by an inadequate social network, limited knowledge of the health system and a denial of (albeit basic) support that as an asylum-seeker she was entitled to. Five months after being discharged from hospital and during her physical rehabilitation from major surgery Mary was detained unexpectedly after an administrative error failed to acknowledge that she had been in hospital. To make matters worse, shortly after her incarceration Mary was misdiagnosed with tuberculosis and placed in solitary confinement for three months. On her eventual release she was quickly detained a second time before eventually being granted refugee status. At the time of fieldwork Mary had been recently diagnosed with HIV which she had contracted in her country of origin while held captive by rebels and subjected to multiple rapes. This diagnosis was particularly distressing because it was unexpected and Mary feared the stigma associated with it. Understandably, Mary's experiences had left her traumatised and regardless of her new found status in a fragile and vulnerable state. Mary had come to the UK at the age of 20 years and was only granted refugee status after 11 years during which she had remained single;

"I think I've suffered enough in life and I think boyfriends and whatever, it's for other kind of people who have got you know a good life but we have suffered throughout." Mary

The cumulative experiences of sexual violence, hysterectomy, contracting HIV and generalised deprivation, isolation and suffering over many years in the UK had significantly disrupted Mary's (imagined) identities of mother and wife. The cumulative interference to her personal development had left feeling emotionally, physically and materially ill-prepared to re-embark upon her gendered life course and had fundamentally disrupted her ontological security. This echoed other participants' who felt opportunities to engage in intimate relationships were destabilised by other reasons such as a lack of trust in men, cultural differences and a general instability in life. Not only did on-going emotional and mental strain undermine attempts to enter into intimate relationships, the absence of these relationships was to be denied a potentially positive influence for their wellbeing.

While Mary's experience of physical illness was not necessarily caused by stress, living with her condition without support, experiencing great isolation, loneliness and relative poverty all within the context of past trauma, was extremely damaging to her mental health. This reinforces the connections between physical illness and enduring emotional and mental distress. Research acknowledges the significant risks to mental health and wellbeing that an amalgamation of poverty,

feelings of Otherness and past trauma can unleash (Burnett, 2002; Doyal and Anderson, 2005; Schweitzer et al., 2006). Mary's extreme physical and psychological suffering was located within a context largely contrived by state failings which not only perpetuated her desperate lived experience but eroded her own personal resources and coping capacities.

While the discussion in this chapter so far has interrogated the wellbeing of respondents within the context of their precarious lives more generally, this next section focuses on the particular legacies of detention.

### 7.3 Legacies of detention

"All the combination of the trauma back home, plus all the experiences I faced during the detention and how I was thrown out from the house, when they combine I find that really, I have gone mad. Every thought I would think was of suicidal thoughts." Pru

There is a wealth of research which documents the erosive impact of detention for the mental and emotional health of those who are detained (Silove et al., 2000; Steel and Silove, 2000; McLoughlin and Warin, 2008; Burnett et al., 2011). This was firmly corroborated by the women in this study with numerous accounts of suicide attempts, self-harm, depression and hopelessness, anxiety, sleep disturbances whilst in detention. The charity workers interviewed also reiterated the long-lasting effects of detention for the women they supported, particularly the time taken to readjust socially and emotionally after release. There remains however very little research which outlines the on-going implications of detention for health. In one key exception Ward (2011: 5) considering the mental health of ex-detainees in Australia has highlighted the significant additional costs as a result of prolonged (mandatory) detention for the long-term healthcare of former asylum-seekers once they are released into the community<sup>38</sup>. This section takes up this issue and unpacks how respondents' emotional and mental health continued to be effected after their release from detention. I begin by examining how this effected capacities to cope with everyday life before moving on to examine how this impacted upon social relationships.

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<sup>38</sup> Ward asserts that in Australia more than one third of those detained for more than two years had new mental health problems in 2006-07, ten times the rate of mental health problems for those detained for less than 3 months.

### 7.3.1 Coping with everyday life

“It [*detention*] affected me mentally, physically. I couldn’t think again, I couldn’t think straight. I was scared of the outside world and I had forgotten everything. I was cooking, you put in onions first, or you put in? [...] I was affected very, very much, I remember the people telling me, “You are going to get on the bus”, but I was scared. You fear that outside, when you see when you are there, I don’t know, this is like a different world.” Mary

Mary’s time in detention had a significant and long-lasting effect on her mental and emotional health, defined by fear and confusion. This played out in her everyday interactions with the ‘outside world’ and interfered with her capacities to engage in quotidian practices. Fundamental home-based activities of cooking traditional food were disrupted as she had forgotten the basic sequencing of previously familiar and well-practiced tasks. This disturbance also ran deeper, unsettling her sense of self and identities that were entwined with the performance of familiar tasks (Christiansen, 1999). Mary’s ability to interact with her local community was also troubled, inducing fear and uncertainty. Similarly, not only did Laura’s experience of release from detention have a detrimental impact on her memory it also had regressive consequences which required her to relearn rudimentary life skills;

“I had to learn to walk again, to learn to talk again. Even though I was going for application for my asylum I didn’t remember, I only remembered my two children but the rest I forgot their names, if you looked at the records now you’d see I told them I’ve forgotten whether they lived or not.” Laura

Memory loss was a recurrent complaint reported by half of all respondents which was associated with the stress of detention and/or the stressors of life after release. This was a source of emotional anguish and frustration;

“I used to read books but now if I’m reading I can’t put anything in my head. I’m just trying to go back, I can’t read and think about something like when I’m sleeping and remember “oh, I read about this”. In Uganda I used to read books and think about what I read but I can’t remember.” Mya

“I notice my memory has been affected, really it is so frustrating. [...] It’s probably stress. You can’t concentrate when you’re stressed, about too many things at one time you lose your concentration.” Berdour

Neurobiological research by McEwen and Sapolsky (1995: 205) states, that while brief periods of stress can affect memory detrimentally, more severe or prolonged stressors can have deleterious effects upon broad aspects of cognition. Not only were periods of detention stressful, the challenges of life beyond posed additional threats. Ironically, problems with memory and concentration only exacerbated stress as it undermined respondents’ abilities to cope with everyday challenges such as navigating what was perceived as an already inaccessible and daunting asylum system. A key source of stress was a pervasive unpredictability and uncertainty of life beyond detention, factors which are shown to contribute negatively to mental and physical health (Kessler, 1997; McEwen, 2008; Sartore et al., 2008).

“I lost memory, I couldn’t remember stuff. I couldn’t speak properly, I am still struggling. My English was good but after detention it went. I couldn’t put the right words, I just want to remember something, I can’t. Then if I want to tell you something I am struggling I know what I want to say but I can’t bring it out.” Mary

In addition to memory loss, Mary’s account highlights problems with word recall and verbal communication. Not only did this interfere with social engagement, it also increased her vulnerability to manipulation. Mary was exploited by two separate solicitors who received significant sums of money for work they did not deliver, abuse she felt ill-equipped to challenge which fuelled her experience of insecurity and disenfranchisement. It was particularly notable that the health and wellbeing of women like Mary who had experienced torture, trafficking and sexual violence were most severely affected by their incarceration, corroborated by the charity workers interviewed and the wider literature (Burnett and Peel, 2001b; Tsangarides, 2012).

### *7.3.2 Relating to others*

Within mental health literature the capacities we have to engage, integrate, trust and accept others are understood as central to social wellbeing (Ryff, 1989; Friedli and Parsonage, 2009). A key legacy of detention was the disruption of some respondents’ social functioning after release. In Mya’s case this was attributed to mood swings and a lack of socialisation born from her incarceration;

“I was very short tempered because in detention all the time you’re thinking, you’re depressed but I come out of detention and I used not to talk to anybody ‘cos I was used to the lifestyle of being aggressive and that kept on with me for a long time, six months or seven months until when I got used to it, my normal lifestyle yeah.” Mya

Berdour described difficulties with mood swings which interfered with maintaining social connections;

“Now sometimes you are in bad mood, and not sometimes it’s most of the time. Because of this stress you are in a bad mood so even you cannot keep communication with your friends even which make you more isolated, more feel lonely. Its simple things you can’t even be socialise with people because your mood up and down, up and down.” Berdour

Berdour’s analysis of the exacerbating nature of social isolation is insightful, with poor communication and mood swings leading to greater loneliness. Noreen also described a process of self-isolation after release from detention;

“Before when I came out from detention [...] I didn’t recognise anyone, they asking me, they say “come, come”. I not go out one, two weeks I just stay in house, I just keep quiet, I’m not talking to anyone. What is happened with me? I don’t know where I am, my mind is going like damaged, inside damaged and physical health problems. You can’t think, I just lay down.” Noreen

Ella’s ability to engage with the community and cope with the everyday was undermined by disorientation caused by being in detention;

“I was not even used to money after a long time, so when I went to the shops after long time everything, it was a new life. I could not cope, I was not coping, I think you are being put away from the community and then you come back, by the time you come back next year everything is different.” Ella

Ella’s description of being ‘put away from the community’ captures what detention symbolically represented and the real-life consequences for her social disengagement after release.

While the majority of respondents had felt their mental and emotional resources had been left permanently impaired, in fact these effects had lessened with time and as their incarceration became a more distant memory (McGregor, 2009). Haben described becoming a 'different person' as a result of daily life stressors but that these resolved with time;

"You know like last year I was really different person because I didn't know myself, always worrying about something, I lose my house, I was like that person, but now thanks God I'm different person." Haben

Despite her continued asylum-seeker status, Haben had gleaned great comfort from the change to her social relationships, notably getting married and having a child. Indeed, notwithstanding the many factors undermining social participation and integration, all respondents described significant, positive social relationships at some stage of their time in the UK which had or continued to offer great support and in many cases ameliorated other negative aspects of their lives in the UK. These social networks are explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

### *7.3.3 A discourse of torture*

"You are always in fear, and every time when you think about those prisons [detention centres] as well, you think about your torture in your country, that one gets you back, you think about the torture you are having here, it also takes you back, you know they continue torturing and torturing you know, [...] you really feel that inferiority complex." Ella

Rule 35 (3) of the Detention Centre Rules (2001) was created to identify people who have been tortured<sup>39</sup> and prevent their detention. Tsangarides (2012) writing for the charity Medical Justice has highlighted the regular flouting of this safeguard, resulting in the unlawful incarceration of thousands of vulnerable individuals for whom detention is described as a 'second torture'. Although seven respondents described themselves as having survived torture, they had all been detained and

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<sup>39</sup> Torture is defined by the United Nations (1987) as: "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions".

only Pru had been assessed and released from detention in accordance with Rule 35. The consequence of this for her wellbeing was significant, exacerbated further by poor overall standards of healthcare in detention. This was reiterated by Jana;

“I think being a victim of torture, a survivor of torture it’s surely one of the last things you need is to be detained ‘cos it brings all, everything back to life as if you’re suffering it all again.” Jana

Jana identified herself in this instance in relation to her experience of torture and highlighted the cumulative nature of this with time in detention. There is consensus that detention remains damaging for the mental health of people like Jana who have been tortured, not least because it can arouse memories of incarceration, provoking re-traumatisation (Salinsky and Dell, 2001; Tsangarides, 2012). Experiences of torture occurred not only in the country of origin but in three participants’ cases during periods of enslavement<sup>40</sup> in the UK by their traffickers.

The framing of experience through a discourse of torture was not only reserved to those who had reported experiences of torture previously, nor was the conceptualisation of torture one-dimensional. This discourse was used to impart experiences of detention but also as the quote above suggests the accumulation of past and present suffering and the consequences for wellbeing. Mya who did not consider herself a ‘survivor of torture’ prior to her incarceration, did feel that she had been ‘psychologically tortured’ in detention;

“I was psychologically tortured by the detention centre because I used to think it was my home, I’ve got no home and when I came out I was like “oh I left the place” I had to come back to this life of people. I had to start to come back to this life, that’s why I can say I was tortured.” Mya

Significantly Mya’s account of torture was conveyed through a distorted sense of place and belonging incurred during her incarceration, causing her to form meaningful attachments to the detention centre which were then disrupted on release. This echoes concerns about the ill-preparedness of detainees for release and the disruptions to wellbeing as they struggle to adapt to

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<sup>40</sup> Pru was enslaved for three years, Janet for one year and Tulisa for one year.

community life (Thomas and Thomas, 2004; Klein and Williams, 2012). In contrast, Rupinder perceived the lack of control and freedom in detention as mental torture;

“Mental torture of being in detention, everybody feels mental torture because somebody has to live according to their rules.” Rupinder

Harper and Raman (2008: 16) attest that the detention of torture survivors raises ethical and health-related issues as “what constitutes torture and whether it is ‘really’ torture is defined by medical and psychological evidence arbitrated by the legal spaces where the right to asylum is decided”. Indeed, what this adopted discourse suggests is that while some respondents firmly believed they had been tortured whilst in Yarl’s Wood, others employed an allegory of torture loosely in their narratives almost as a means of conveying and substantiating the extent of their suffering more generally;

“The immigration I don’t really know because I think they are torturing, I have some torture with them, I think I have suffered a lot and I don’t need to be suffering again, I suffered a lot in Africa and I came here for safety.” Tulisa

While the utilisation of this discourse was to reflect the truly distressing nature of detention (and in some cases life beyond), it might also be understood as a (sub)conscious attempt to locate narratives within a state-validated discourse, assimilating and justifying entitlements to support under international human rights law which condemns the use of torture. Similarly, Kleinman et al (1997: 10 cited in Lenette et al., 2012: 5) suggests that the ‘trauma stories’ of refugees have become “the symbolic capital, with which they enter exchanges for physical resources and achieve the status of political refugee”. This resonates with the discussion of truth, trust and evidence at the beginning of this report and suggests that the culture of disbelief might have permeated the construction and telling of personal narratives. Whittaker et al (2005: 178) observe that refugees “navigate multiple sets of identities and norms from differing cultures, transnational networks, generations, traditions, religions and sciences” which suggests a certain flexibility and capacity to adopt certain discourses such as a language of human rights of which a vocabulary of torture remains central. Alternatively, this might be understood as an acknowledgement of and active seeking out of a certain biopolitics through (re)claiming the identity of ‘victim/survivor of torture’ (Foucault, 1973). Framing experiences within a lexicon of torture was perhaps to inadvertently draw the gaze of the dominant biomedical discourse and invite a certain biopolitical identity that brings with state protection (from return and further incarceration). Furthermore, the reclaiming of this discourse might be viewed as a

strategic contestation of ill-treatment and active pursuit of social and political justice in the face of insecurity (Ong, 1995). This hypothesising suggests that (in)security remained a motivating factor to which respondents sought to respond. Indeed in this next section the centrality of security - notably ontological security – is shown to have great significance for their wellbeing.

#### 7.4 Ontological security and wellbeing

“If you get status you feel, you don’t fear anything anymore [...] I’m not scared, I’m confident but if you don’t have the status of course you don’t know what is going to happen to you if they come and now I can even go and ask them what is the requirements of having this and this and this. I’m not scared because I know I’m straight.” Mya

While the specific legacies of detention were detrimental, these experiences converged with numerous stressors after release to pose an accumulative impact on respondents’ wellbeing. It has been argued throughout this thesis that this convergence of factors contrived a state of precarity which I suggest here might be perceived as a destabilised sense of ontological security. Ontological security, first coined by Giddens (1991), is defined by the security gained from order, stability and routine that together give us meaning in life. In her work with unaccompanied young asylum-seekers, Chase (2013: 860) contends that ontological security is a crucial dimension of wellbeing as it accommodates our existential need for “a sense of security stemming from being able to carve out a life plan and envisaging a trajectory into the future”. Moreover she notes a correlation between certainty of the future, contingent particularly on immigration status, and wellbeing. This is useful for interrogating the on-going wellbeing of my respondents given that precarity pervasively undermined their ontological security by eroding their stability and security throughout their everyday lives. Like the subjects in Chase’s study, the lives of my respondents were defined by everyday insecurity and instability, which was revealed through their emotional wellbeing. This also speaks to geographies of home. Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Heidegger (1993) have emphasised the importance of being ‘at home within space’ for conscious awareness and identity; factors that Keyes (2005) identifies as integral to mental health. Indeed, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty both note the capacity to traverse (and maintain control over) space as being central to wellbeing and warn of the potential dangers to health when rapport with space is undermined (Heidegger, 1993: 359). This suggests that the containment and security afforded through home (and crucially eroded for many forced migrants) might be instrumental in ensuring ontological security and offers a way of understanding the significance when home is disrupted. I would like to examine some examples of this in some greater depth.

As the quote at the beginning of this section indicates, a significant object of hope and source of worry was immigration status. Charity workers stressed the erosive implications of uncertain status for migrants' everyday lives as it undermined the extent to which they could actuate everyday choices and plan for the future. Mya who had been successfully awarded refugee status identified her change in status as a turning point when her sense of fear was reduced and she achieved greater clarity of purpose. Before being granted refugee status Mya's everyday life in the short-term and projected longer term had remained precarious and unknown. Attaining refugee status had provided a certain coherence and stability in life, sustained through the recovering of some power and control. Jana also spoke of winning status and the lucidity this afforded her;

“After winning your status then it becomes different you know? You are able to have a mail in your name, have a proof of address, able to open a bank account, able to have an NHS number, you are able to have an ID – you are somebody, you are recognised as a person, you, it's a feeling that one can't, it's someone who has been through this that can understand what I'm talking about.” Jana

Refugee status had for Jana bestowed her with a legitimacy and sense of purpose that she had previously lacked as an asylum-seeker. The fact she describes herself as being 'recognised as a person' echoes the discussion in the previous chapter about a human versus criminal discourse as gaining status was also to (re)claim the right to be a 'person' again, reversing a process of dehumanisation that she had until then endured. Haben anticipated that refugee status would also equate to improved ontological confidence;

“Oh, I'm happy because at least I [would] have confidence, I know I'm living in UK, I know myself after that, you know. Like when you stay here and you know you're alright I know how to manage myself. But now I don't have any support, I don't have to do anything. Even I can't study here so, how I use myself? How I get confidence?” Haben

Haben suggests that the confidence and stability she anticipated once securing status was associated with 'knowing how to manage' herself. This suggests that while Haben's uncertain immigration status undermined a general coherence in her life, secure status had the potential, at least in her imagined future, to ameliorate the precarity of her present situation by enhancing her sense of ontological purpose, autonomy and self-confidence. In contrast however, Berdour was less positive about the anticipated benefits of refugee status;

“Even if I got my status today I don’t know [...] what will happen with my life, already these six years have very bad impact on me. They just destroy our life literally. Really I don’t know.” Berdour

While released from detention participants with uncertain immigration statuses continued to occupy a liminal state. In their consideration of liminality McLoughlin and Warin (2008: 260) assert that “[t]he basic premise is that one is separated from the main social group, enters a state of liminality (of anomalous betwixt and between), and is finally returned to the group, transformed into a different status”. This, they assert, has corrosive impacts upon mental health, linked in particular to mental illness. These observations are of immigration detainees for whom liminality is certainly extreme, but nonetheless remain useful for conceptualising the experiences of ex-detainees living in the community. While released from spaces of detention respondents with uncertain immigration status continued to wait in a liminal state of uncertainty, further fuelling precarity. Berdour highlights the significance of this extended timeframe and the erosive and irreversible damage that years spent as an asylum-seeker had wrought on her emotional and mental wellbeing, precipitating symptoms of depression;

“You don’t feel the enjoyment of life, you don’t feel it. You eat, you drink, you sleep because you have to but you don’t feel the life, the enjoyment of it, you don’t enjoy it.” Berdour

This resonates with the experiences of other informants who had lost hope and displayed profound expressions of hopelessness and despair, at times precipitating suicidal feelings;

“I want to do whatever I want but my mind is now not working, I don’t know how I can manage myself. Maybe next year, maybe. I don’t know. You know sometimes I want to kill myself.” Noreen

“It’s when I get up and I see “what am I doing in the world now?” You can’t get up and do something like others, you just get up, sit in the bed.” Pru

Pru’s referral to others highlights her recognition of difference; her identity as an asylum-seeker denied her opportunities to engage in work or education in a way that was granted to others. The restrictions to working associated with uncertain immigration status further exacerbated ontological security as it interfered with respondents’ financial autonomy, perpetuated dependency on the state

and undermined personal choices and freedoms. Unemployment and inactivity are indisputably damaging to health on numerous levels, not least because of poverty, stigma and social isolation (Bartley, 1994; Jin et al., 1995).

“My greatest problem is [...] I can’t work. Even if they can offer a course, even a course to do voluntary, because I can’t and I’m always crying, life is not easy for me, staying in all morning [...] it’s killing me a lot really.” Tulisa

It is acknowledged that healthy and meaningful lives are reliant upon productive occupations which provide a sense of purpose, structure and self-efficacy (Mee and Sumsion, 2001). Moreover, the absence of opportunities to achieve ‘flow’ through fulfilling engagement in productive tasks is erosive for health (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Gentile and Miller, 2008). This means that the ‘enforced leisure’ and prolonged occupational restrictions faced by asylum-seekers may result in low self-esteem, frustration and despair (Johnson, 2003; Palmer and Ward, 2007). While this was particularly true for respondents who were asylum-seekers and for Bella as a Foreign National Offender (FNO), matters did not always improve once status was secured;

“If I find a job I can leave and find a better place I want to live in but because I don’t have a job, finding a job is hard, it’s hard. So I keep on struggling with life until we find a job you want, yeah.” Mya

Since gaining refugee status and entitlements to work, Mya had been unable to find a satisfying job. For Mya finding work also intersected with other freedoms and life choices, such as moving into more desirable (and therefore more expensive) accommodation. These had a cumulative effect on her health by prohibiting her from moving forward in her life and fuelling a broader sense of stagnation. While many respondents had clear ambitions and goals they were often inhibited from acting on these meaningfully by the restrictions they faced. This resonates with Sen’s (1985; 2006) capabilities theory which distinguishes between potential capabilities and attained functionings, which in essence means that attained functionings are the freedom to actually be and do that which holds value and purpose. There is a co-dependent relationship between freedom and health as when freedoms are denied, health can deteriorate. Indeed, while emotional and mental health are key to resilience and are health assets, they also remain instrumental in building the capabilities that moderate risk and influence life chances and outcomes (Friedli, 2009). While most women’s goals were to work, have their own home, become active members of their wider communities and create

independent lives for themselves, their capacities to fulfil these were undermined by the multiple reasons detailed throughout previous chapters. Rupinder described a similar sense which was rooted ultimately in power and control;

“We want natural life. Nowhere is our life natural. It is granted life but we want natural life. You live natural life and I live granted life. It is different.” Rupinder

Rupinder distinguished between the life that she hoped to live, one that was ‘natural’ and self-directed, and the ‘granted’ life she was currently leading. The concept of a ‘granted life’ is illuminative as it represents how the hegemonic power dynamic with the state in which Rupinder was caught orchestrated what was ‘given’ or not, becoming absorbed into Rupinder’s perception of life<sup>41</sup>. This meant a certain lack of autonomy and control which was erosive for her emotional and mental health because of continued stress and worry. This resonates with Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) dual conceptions of ‘objective’ and ‘lived’ space. Drawing on these concepts in her exploration of agoraphobic women’s lived experiences, Davidson (2000a) notes that objective space is the (imposed) formal “space of rulers and tape measures” and lived space “emerges from a relationship to our environs that is both perceived and produced through the activities we engage in” (643-644). Rupinder’s experience echoes this distinction as her capacity to transform her objective or ‘granted’ life into that which was lived or ‘natural’ was inhibited by the everyday restrictions she encountered in her everyday activities and negotiations. Crucially, much of these restrictions remained distinctly spatial and played out in her negotiations with her homespace, local community and restricted mobilities. That said Rupinder still demonstrated endeavours to contest this, for example through her meaningful use of her homespace to cook traditional food and transform it into a homely, ‘lived’ space - however momentarily. A sense of meaning and purpose therefore remains central to health and wellbeing. Not only does it facilitate the effective management of challenging situations and reduce the stress associated with them, it supports the building and maintaining of psychological resources which help us cope (Seligman, 1990; Wong et al., 2006; Wong, 2013). This includes being able to see the positive potential of negative circumstances outside our control and build hope.

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<sup>41</sup> It is interesting that Rupinder identifies the difference between her ‘granted life’ and my ‘natural life’, highlighting something of the unequal power dynamic within the research setting. This is conceptually explored in Chapter Three.

The cumulative experiences of traumatic events endured by respondents in some cases distorted everyday experiences of place. Pru experienced flashbacks which disturbingly transformed her present day experience of certain (public) places as they converged unpredictably with past events.

“Even if I would be walking I would be a day dreamer. I would see, sometimes I would see the [immigration] officers chasing me, I would get flashbacks of my husband being burned the way I saw him, being burnt alive. I would see the way they were raping me in the bush, I would see the way everything would come and I would feel, sometimes I would be walking and I hear, them hunting for me. I just crossing anyhow without knowing where, where I am supposed to go.” Pru

Parr (1998b; 1999: 688) explores the ‘delusional geographies’ of people with mental health problems and highlights how the “taken for granted everyday social world is disrupted for some people, and that this disruption involves confusing and dynamic transitions of everyday geographies” including the body, the home, and the city. Although concerned primarily with individuals experiencing psychosis, there are parallels between Parr’s observations and Pru’s experiences which were later diagnosed as symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Pru’s flashbacks predominantly occurred when out in public spaces around London and as such she retreated to the home for security. The intrusion of horrific past events in Burundi merged with images of UK immigration officers chasing her, creating a distorted experience of space, rendering it unstable, unbounded and unpredictable. This resonates with Davidson’s (2000a; 2001) work on agoraphobic women’s experiences of depersonalisation and disembodiment, and how the extrication from public spaces was used to reinforce stability and ontological security (Giddens, 1991; Padgett, 2007).

When expanded to allow for a broader emotional framing Pru’s account reveals additional complexity. In the first instance Pru’s distressing experiences discouraged her from engaging with her local community which increased her social isolation and further undermined her emotional wellbeing. Secondly, it was only when her health deteriorated did Pru receive formal support. After release from detention Pru had continued living in a bus stop for a year, but she was only considered eligible for assistance from the local authority and mental health services when her behaviour became inappropriate and noticeably ‘out of place’. Central to this entitlement was a formal diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the role this served in triggering a procedural chain of events otherwise denied to Pru. Importantly, this demanded Pru’s transformation from ‘ex-

detained asylum-seeker woman' to 'mental health patient'. After a brief period in a night shelter, Pru was given temporary housing by the local authority. Her experience of this accommodation remained precarious and uncertain however as her tenancy was reviewed bi-monthly and was reliant on her mental stability. Subjectively, the dwelling fluctuated between a place of safety and one of confinement where Pru described being under 'house arrest' and lacked personal freedoms;

“They had offered me one month so when it elapsed, I'd said “now where am I going to go?” [...] So they said they will keep assessing me, they said “now she'll be there another two months” so after two months my solicitor contacted them, they didn't tell her anything up to today so I'm just like that. I don't know.” Pru

Given that people with severe mental illness account for some of the most socially excluded and vulnerable people in society, Pru's additional status as an asylum-seeker woman further compounded her ostracisation and dependency. Indeed, there are glaring disparities between the priorities outlined in UK mental health policy and the relevance of these to individuals like Pru who have a mental illness yet also occupy a legally uncertain position in society. These fervent visions include a so-called targeted universalism and social inclusion; a preventative approach to public health; and a rights-based approach underpinned by the Human Rights Act 1998 (Rankin, 2005). The NHS is itself infused with a recovery-orientated approach that claims to strive for the meaningful inclusion of individuals with mental health problems in society. Despite an admirable philosophy, the experience of individuals like Pru who remain particularly marginalised in society and who already have limited rights and questionable legal status, suggests that the inclusive rhetoric is not as comprehensive as implied (Burnett and Peel, 2001a; Tribe, 2002).

### *7.5 Chapter conclusions*

This chapter has unpacked the implications of respondents' precarious lives for their wellbeing focusing in particular on the impact of legacies and processes of detention. By avoiding a Western psychopathological approach, my framing of wellbeing has been deliberately expansive, allowing the emotional and embodied accounts of respondents' to lead. This has afforded insights into the construction and impact of precarity on emotional, embodied and physical scales. Conceptually I have suggested the negative consequences of precarity for wellbeing is best understood as a disruption to ontological security which speaks to the discussion in the previous chapter of the disrupted life course to which home remains a crucial component.

Throughout this chapter I have avoided using diagnostic categories and concur that Western psychopathological approaches have the potential to neglect and subjugate indigenous and culturally specific interpretations of distress and forms of healing. That said, a complete avoidance of Western psychotherapeutic approaches is surely counterproductive so long as these are cautiously and ethically applied. Indeed several respondents had benefited from specialist treatment particularly those who had survived torture<sup>42</sup>. It remains clear however that being led by the lived experiences of respondents, both for therapeutic and research purposes, remains a key access point to understanding and supporting emotional and mental wellbeing needs. This has the additional benefit of tracing the social, political and institutional factors which precipitate poor health thus seeking to avoid a blame culture which locates the 'problem' with the individual.

This thesis has so far constructed a picture of respondents' lives through a discourse of precarity, achieved through the wide lenses of home and wellbeing. The next chapter takes up the women's responses to precarity through a focus on their informal and institutional social support networks which occupied a central role in all narratives. While I suggest that these social trajectories acted as conduits through which a range of nuanced responses were transmitted and everyday challenges mitigated, encounters also sometimes resulted in the proliferation of precarity more broadly.

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<sup>42</sup> This included support through charitable organisations and NHS services.

Migratory scholarship suggests that the asylum system has tended to represent migrant women as passive victims who are 'secondary' to men (Crawley, 1999). This, as discussed previously, has led to an identity politics which simultaneously infantilises and demonises women. There are however many examples of migrant women's endeavours to resist hegemonic, gendered forces. This includes acts of (political) resistance, what Nyers (2003) coins 'abject cosmopolitanism', acts of resilience through to more nuanced demonstrations of agency (Bachay and Cingel, 1999; Goodkind and Deacon, 2004; McMichael and Manderson, 2004). These provide a strengths-based starting point to conceptualise these responses (Lenette et al., 2012: 2), something this chapter hopes to further.

The term 'resilience' originates from ecological systems theory and the capacities of natural environments to "absorb shocks and disturbance and still maintain function" (Berkes and Folke, 1998: 12). Resilience has also been applied to people and their abilities to cope and respond to challenging situations, with the resilience of migrants undergoing varied cross-disciplinary investigations (Schweitzer et al., 2007; Ungar, 2008; Bottrell, 2009; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). A key concern has been the unhelpful conflation of resilience and resistance, as well as the problematic romanticism of resistance which through assumptions about autonomous action forecloses more nuanced interrogations of everyday responses to adversity (Sparke, 2008). In proposing a countertopography that offsets global capitalism's immobilizing effects, Cindi Katz (2004) has problematized potential responses by suggesting four components; the first, acts of 'resilience' which constitute coping mechanisms which facilitate the continuation of life; second, acts that 'rework' inequalities whilst operating within available structures; third, acts which demonstrate an oppositional consciousness to the extent that they qualify as 'resistance'; and finally, acts which have 'revolutionary' possibility (Aitken et al., 2006). These responses differ depending on varied degrees of critical consciousness (Katz, 2004: 247).

Considerations of resilience have highlighted its social characterisation and its imbrication with family, community and culture (Lyons et al., 1998; Ungar, 2008: 225). This underscores the social environment when coping with adversity and the consequences for identity (Bohle et al., 2009; Skovdal et al., 2009). Hunt (2008: 281) observes that migrant women undergo an interchange between structure and agency, where the structure refers to "the environment of opportunities and constraints in which we find ourselves and which influence our actions, while agency refers to

people's capacity to act" either individually or collectively. Despite barriers within host environments, Hunt highlights women's creative agency through primarily social practices. Doron (2005) notes a difference between community and individual resilience. Whilst the former is the ability to respond to crises in ways that strengthen community bonds and resources (Chenoweth and Stehlik, 2001), the latter is "an extraordinary atypical personal ability to revert or 'bounce back' to a point of equilibrium despite significant adversity" (Lenette et al., 2012: 1). Importantly, while facets of community resilience are keys to individual resilience, they are not mutually inclusive (Livingstone and Greene, 2002).

Borrowing from Katz's (2004) framework, this chapter unpacks participants' responses to everyday precarity, particularly the utilisation of social support. This I suggest constituted varying demonstrations of agency, defined as "the intention and the practice of taking action for one's own self-interest or the interests of others" (Castree et al., 2003: 159-160 cited in Rogaly, 2009). Because their lives were characterised by vulnerability, insecurity and in some cases destitution, all respondents had developed ways and means of coping. McGregor (2008: 472) notes a "slippage in discussions of abjection that conflates the 'act of force' to which those excluded are exposed with an essential condition, both naturalised and undifferentiated". This occludes the range of responses that women demonstrated such as those this chapter identifies. The first two sections of this chapter examine the significance of informal and institutional support that emerged from respondents' accounts and unpack how these (dis)enabled acts of resilience in the main and reworking in the minority. The third section highlights the 'everydayness' within respondents' accounts and argues for greater acknowledgement of the quotidian as a legitimate demonstration of resilience and response to precarity. I conclude by examining the role that charitable organisations played in fostering acts of resistance.

## 8.1 Informal social support

During their time in the UK, the presence and absence of informal social support remained of central import. Over the next two sections I unpack the role of migrant communities and strangers, and then family and partners respectively.

### *8.1.1 Migrants communities and strangers*

"So I'm in the hospital and [...] two friends came [...] to see me and it was really, really, really hopeless. She said, "I have to take you to my house so that I can look after you". Remember

she was also an asylum-seeker [...] This girl had nothing, she was also in the same boat as me but she managed to look after me until I recovered.” Mary

A striking feature of all respondents’ narratives was the prolific accounts of support, kindness and sustenance received from individuals in the UK which comprised a network of informal support utilised at every stage of the migratory journey. This constituted the most significant means by which respondents coped with the practical, material and psychosocial challenges of everyday life. These networks consisted predominantly of other migrant women of differing nationalities and immigration statuses located across the country. Particularly notable was the sharing of very limited resources, enabling participants to survive. Mary’s experience, quoted above, resonates with work by Dwyer and Brown (2005) who observe that tighter immigration policy has left growing numbers of asylum-seekers destitute and dependent upon other forced migrants. Of particular significance was assistance they offered with accommodation for varying lengths of time.

Other participants relied on this support to meet their basic material needs including food, clothing and supplementing inadequate financial resources. In one remarkable case, Mary’s friends rallied together and raised £3000 to cover her solicitors’ fees while she was detained. More commonly however support consisted of small amounts of money or items which helped keep women ‘afloat’;

“My friend, she is helping me as well. If I said sorry, I don’t have money or I need these things, she can buy for me. Yesterday I went her house, and she gave me gift. And I said “what is this gift?” and she said, “no, no, you can take”. She give me one shirt, from TK Maxx.” Noreen

Some participants were in touch with others they had met in Yarl’s Wood, offering emotional, material and at times financial support. Because women were frequently dispersed after release and ex-detainees commonly had limited resources a key deterrent to maintaining social contact was geographical distance and the cost of travel. Contact via phone therefore constituted the most affordable means of communication, constituting a fundamental strategy in managing social isolation. Jennifer who was detained soon after arrival to Britain, relied wholly on contacts made in detention. She had collaborated with other women in Yarl’s Wood to invest in a mobile phone

'family pack' which enabled them to stay in touch<sup>43</sup>. Only through this network did Jennifer stay off the streets after release. Her experience demonstrates an effective and collective enterprise that exploited structural resources available and shared resources to overcome barriers to communication, constituting an example of resilience. Participants remained preoccupied however with finding the money to buy credit or update technology;

"I had to starve myself to save to buy a phone, and when I could not take it any more I begged my sister to please help me buy a phone [...] I really pleaded with her, not that she had the money she could not give it to me, she also does not have the money. So eventually she gave me £50 then I had also saved £40 and bought it at £90." Amelia

As well as illustrating the importance of her sister's support, Amelia highlights self-sacrifice as a fundamental strategy in making ends meet.

Respondents had ethnically diverse, but usually entirely non-white informal social networks that comprised people of various immigration statuses. Platonic relationships with men were unusual, the exception being men in positions of authority such as pastors or charity workers. There was no strict correlation between individuals of the same nationality helping each other, though the majority of women were African and in some cases their shared identities as 'African women' was identified as initiating contact. Khanara, Rupinder and Noreen were noticeable in their lack of contact with their local Black and Minority Ethnic communities which was interesting given their shared identities as Asian women compared to other African respondents. Both Rupinder and Noreen feared being ostracised and persecuted by the UK Pakistani community having transgressed traditional gendered codes of behaviour; Noreen having undergone two divorces and Rupinder having married for love. Khanara spoke unfavourably of the UK-based Mongolian diaspora;

"It's just that they have such a good life. They think of themselves as if they were like royal highness or whatever. If I was there to commit someone it would be like "what you doing here? You don't belong to here with me or with us" so I just don't like to put myself down in front of people." Khanara

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<sup>43</sup> This facility enabled members of the group to make unlimited calls to each other for a small, fixed monthly fee which individuals would take turns paying.

Khanara's decision to disassociate herself from this community highlights an awareness of class differences within the diaspora and being perceived as socially inferior (McGregor, 2008). The ensuing isolation however was compounded by equally resentful feelings towards the UK, undermining her belonging and fuelling feelings of difference and isolation. Considering the social complexities of resilience and stress, Lenette et al (2012: 10) observe that "[p]art of the normative 'neatness' often implied within the resilience discourse is the notion of separating sources of stress from sources of resilience, which assumes that social sources of resilience and stress are entirely discrete phenomena". Khanara's experience highlights just this. While she gleaned some benefits from social contact with her husband, the Mongolian community created emotional instability and exacerbated the stressful and marginalised nature of her already precarious life.

Contrastively, Berdour identified benefits that her participation in Sudanese community events in Manchester allowed;

"Everyone here is asylum-seeker or was asylum-seeker or refugee, so everyone they know the situation [...] so we don't talk about it, we try to ignore it, communicate Sudanese that's it [...] We try to live in the moment like Sudanese community as if you are in Sudan and just forget it for the moment, because food is Sudanese, people are Sudanese, atmosphere is Sudanese so you live this moment as if you are at home." Berdour

While for migrants their social environment may increase worry and anxiety it can also provide resources from which individuals may draw to survive (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Berdour highlights the relief afforded from shared experiences and uncertain immigration status, while evoking a visceral sense of home that offered emotional comfort and the temporary suspension of worry. Through this community Berdour forged connections with her homeland highlighting the intersections of home, memory, identity and belonging (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 199). Work on belonging identifies that feeling at home is 'not just a personal matter, but also a social one' (Antonsich, 2010: 649), whilst Doron (2004) identifies belonging as a central to community resilience. Indeed, respondents attested that when belonging to a community, opportunities to glean benefits were great. While some participants, through their community involvement, contributed to and benefited from community resilience, others were able to develop and enhance personal resilience by accessing social support. Numerous barriers existed however, including poverty;

“Sometimes they have some Cameroonian parties, some friends who come, but you know when they call you how am I going to go with train transportation? [...] I was telling one sister in church, she took me this weekend I was there with her, we went to church, took some food and she bought me £4 ticket.” Tulisa

While women were deeply grateful for support, prolonged dependency induced guilt and a reluctance to accept generosity. This was despite the recognition that social interaction was central to managing health and wellbeing;

“You know when you get up and you have an appointment, you get up and you have somewhere to go, just to freshen your mind at least. But if you keep indoors I think a lot, a lot, I pile everything in the room I find I’m not fit. That’s when I start from square one.” Pru

Social contact therefore supported respondents to cope with daily challenges as remaining at home could mean stagnation and ‘dwelling’ on the past. The benefits of social interaction for mental health were also garnered by opportunities to support and encourage others.

Jennifer was the only respondent who had established a meaningful network of white UK-born people which had offered unprecedented levels of support during her second period of detention and after her release. This contact was unusual as other respondents had a lack of white friends and expressed a sense of social exclusion exacerbated by worklessness and poverty;

“I think I’m not in the community of them, most of community I’m in are for African’s. I haven’t got a chance of going British community, other than the community at conferences or going to [charity].” Pru

Pru’s experience is revealing as it indicates a distinct African community to which she belonged and a dissociation from the broader ‘British community’. However, Pru also feared being ‘tipped off’ to the UKBA by those with a grudge and expressed concern that the ethnic conflict she had fled might endure within the diaspora. This underscored trust as an important condition which determined the attachments made to informal social support before and after detention, and the benefits gleaned from them (Hynes, 2009). Berdour identified cultural differences between African and UK communities as an additional deterrent;

“We went there and they were doing like BBQ in the other side of the house [...] and they didn’t invite us. It’s not about that we wanted to eat, no it’s about some people there and you’re cooking something. In my culture if this happen, you invite! [...] I don’t feel comfortable if I’m eating and someone is sitting near me, I have to invite him even if small seats but they don’t do this here and in Sudan if you want to come to someone, even you can come without invitation just you pop in, if you are home it’s your luck!” Berdour

Berdour’s cultural conceptualisation of socialising and hosting were infused with symbolic and practical representations of home, with home itself being constructed through the sharing of food and relaxed attitudes towards visitation and accommodating strangers (van der Horst, 2004). This resonates with earlier discussions about the impact that inadequate or indeed *absent* homes might have for social participation and by extension wellbeing.

Respondents sought and were willing to accept help from people whom they had just met, utilising the smallest of connections to others and capitalising on tenuous associations. This willingness highlights individuals’ capacities of resourcefulness, determination and the maximisation of opportunities. In the absence of support networks, some respondents had become reliant on complete strangers. Research emphasises key connections for refugees between the practical kindness of strangers and psychosocial wellbeing (Fozzard and Tembo, 1996; Kohli and Mather, 2003), indeed some participants described remarkable encounters with strangers;

“When I was at the bus stop there is a lady who came and saw me so I was in a terrible state [...] she said she want to help me, and I said “I haven’t eaten anything, I’m hungry”. She took me, there was a takeaway she took me to the takeaway and bought for me something to eat then [...] I told her a few of my story then she was so really sympathetic with me then she said “have you had any shower at all?” and I said “no”. Being a woman she said “oh that’s really ah”, then she said “come with me to my place” she took me to her place, gave me shower, gave me some clothes to change.” Pru

Pru’s relationship with this older Ugandan woman with British citizenship developed over time and Pru eventually lived with her for some months, building a close and long-lasting relationship.

Relationships formed with strangers were not always positive, sometimes resulting in exploitative associations fuelled by dependency and abuse. Noreen lived with a family friend who in exchange

for accommodation used her as an unpaid domestic servant (or slave) for five years. At particularly vulnerable points Tulisa and Janet were both forced to exchange sex for work and shelter after escaping their traffickers and fearing being caught.

#### *8.1.2 Family, marriage and intimate relationships*

“If you’ve got family ties by the law, the family was there for me to witness, to say that they can live with me [...] they gave me their passport, it was a family-ties issue which helped me a lot.” Mya

For the minority of participants who had been reunited or maintained connections with family, this contact was important in alleviating more generalised stress and garnering emotional comfort. These connections were however unusual as most women contended with extended separation and uncertainty, particularly with regards to their children’s welfare. While there were instances of transnational connections i.e. telephone calls, the lack of reported connections was most salient. This contact was disrupted by conflict and violence, estrangement from family or more contemporary barriers such as poverty. Those with family members in the UK reported co-dependent relationships that helped enhance resilience in practical and emotional means. As the quote above suggests, Mya’s family in the UK had been crucial to winning refugee status under the ‘right to private and family life’, Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Indeed, family is understood as a mode of resilience in spaces of exile and refuge through its role as “a durable and portable relational form” through which identity and belonging is constituted (Harker, 2012).

Children were a key source of resilience, for those who had children and those who aspired to becoming mothers;

“What keeps me strong and what keeps me going is I never know if they will find my children. They are the only ones. If I didn’t think about them maybe I could be, maybe you could not have known me. [...] Some people have found their kids. It gives me more courage to keep on to put more strength on me.” Jennifer

“So many things you forget with children. You remember children, safety and hobbies of children. You remember everything about children not about you [...] it’s very good for me if God give me baby then everything I left I forget.” Rupinder

While the potential of regaining contact kept Jennifer motivated, Rupinder felt a child might help her cope with painful memories. Potential aside, there was a tension as the absence of children remained a significant stressor; for Rupinder highlighting her perceived inadequacies as a woman because she could not conceive as discussed in Chapter Six.

As well as a source of emotional strength, a minority of participants perceived children as a practical asset;

“I see my one friend, she’s got two kids you know I told you she is from Pakistan and four years now she got status she taking benefit, child tax credit. [...] I need a child because now you get money and also your mind is busy always.” Noreen

The advantages of children were for Noreen multifaceted; helping to establish a routine and a busy state of mind whilst securing financial support from the state.

Marriage and intimate relationships held real and imagined potential for individual resilience. Rupinder for example emphasized the support that she and her husband offered each other, especially when detained together. Tulisa aspired to having a relationship and had been advised this might help secure British citizenship. This however had left her vulnerable;

“When I go to my lawyer she always telling me what the law is all about, “if you can get somebody to get married to you that would be good for you, it would be quicker”, or “if you had a child also that would be quicker” [...] When I tell this man [...] I went away on Monday to see him in restaurant, he just pulled the table on me and everybody was looking at me so I have to run away and just go. I was even scared, I had to change my number. I was even scared maybe he would call immigration for me.” Tulisa

Tulisa’s active endeavours to form intimate relationships were unusual however as the majority of participants were generally more wary. Reasons included being electronically tagged, concern about passing on HIV/AIDS, feeling emotionally ill-prepared for intimate relations, and a lack of a permanent home.

“Sometimes I get some boyfriends but I find myself not interested so much in relationship, sometimes you say how are you going to tell him you are an asylum [seeker] or how are you

going, he might not understand you [...] I wouldn't mind because if you have somebody maybe sometimes you cannot be totally depressed somehow". Pru

Pru captures the internal struggle over forming relationships with men while also recognising the potential benefits to her mental health. Berdour highlighted other cultural and emotional tensions;

"I [was] involved with someone but from another country and this a big problem in itself, different cultures, different language, everything different, to come together it's so difficult and I think this relationship put more stress on my own stress." Berdour

A deterrent to forming trusting, intimate relationships with men was a history of sexual violence as a result of numerous scenarios including rape by soldiers, being attacked in refugee camps, while being trafficked, being forced to work as sex slaves and transactional sex (Burnett and Peel, 2001a). Avoiding intimate relationships was at times a means of self-protection and a key coping mechanism. For a minority investing in a relationship signified a shift towards permanence though for Haben and Khanara who had married after release from detention, this was undermined by being required to live separately. By contrast, Amelia had met her partner in Yarl's Wood but they had been dispersed to different parts of the UK and denied the right to live together. This forced separation caused misery for both women, transforming the 'home' into a site of absence and detention by contrast inscribed with happy memories.

This section has unpacked the role of informal social support in participants' narratives, in particular migrant communities, family and intimate relationships. Whilst these have been shown to afford opportunities to develop individual resilience, they also presented stressors which exacerbated everyday precarity and undermined opportunities to realise this potential. The following section takes up the institutional support that participants accessed.

## 8.2 Institutional social support

This section interrogates the significance of institutional support, including religious institutions and charities, and considers the opportunities that this offered to respond to precarity.

### *8.2.1 Faith-based organisations*

"I go there every Sunday for service and then they've got fellowships and bible study [...] Yeah, it's very important to me, I need to socialise to take away that thing of detention

because in detention I used to be my own, so if I've got time I go to church, I've got a social life." Mya

With the exception of Noreen and Rupinder who were Muslims, all respondents self-identified as either Christian or Catholic. With the withdrawal of state support for asylum-seekers over the past 20 years, faith-based organisations (FBO) have stepped in to 'plug the gap'. Cloke et al (2009) observe that FBOs have been instrumental in providing service-delivery, capacity-building and political advocacy to asylum-seekers. For the majority of participants, church or mosques enhanced individual resilience on account of the practical, social, emotional and spiritual support they afforded.

After arriving in the UK, Ella managed to escape her trafficker. Ella was alone in London and feared being caught and imprisoned again. After boarding a bus Ella resolved to find the only familiar place she could think of in her alien environment; a church.

"So when I came out [of the bus] it was time for church, it was around half past ten, eleven there were people still entering, so my target was to ask these people if there is someone, if they know someone who comes from Uganda, and as they finished the service I went straight to the clergyman and told him "I'm from Uganda, I wonder if there are any from Uganda?" and he said "yeah, I've got many!" And started, he called some people then like an African lady." Ella

The Ugandan woman who Ella met became a significant support, welcoming Ella into her home and helping her over a number of years. D'Addario et al (2007: 110) note that in view of often desperate circumstances, migrants are especially willing to approach those of the same nationality for support. The two women's shared nationality was certainly significant, corroborated by other African participants who were more likely to have social connections with those of the same nationality<sup>44</sup>. The church was however a firm, 'common ground', undergirded by the pastor's involvement and their shared faith. Ella resourcefully identified and tapped into this key transnational resource which transcended geographical boundaries. Research highlights the significant potential that local faith-

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<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, the women of Mongolian and Pakistani nationalities were more isolated and were less inclined to socialise with others of the same nationality.

based organisations (FBO) hold to “utilise their pre-existing local networks and buildings, plus their shared identity, social vision, religious narratives and public leaders, to mobilise, coordinate, register, train, console, [and] encourage” while building on existing community coping mechanisms, and harnessing social capital, and strengthening community resilience (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Ager, 2013: 49). These authors are concerned with FBO’s ability to resolve conflict abroad but these observations remain equally pertinent to their influence in the UK. Mary identified a range of benefits;

“I lived with so many, but that one we met in church. Remember we used to go to this big church and I realised that she was Ugandan as well, she realised yes [...] So she said can you come and pray. That’s how I started going to her house, we would go and pray and pray and pray and pray the whole night.” Mary

Like Ella, Mary’s shared nationality and faith helped strengthen her connections to others, secure accommodation and spiritual comfort. Similarly, Bella highlighted prayer with friends as a way of ameliorating everyday struggles. The significance of introductions made by the pastor in Ella’s case was reiterated by others who implied the involvement of religious leaders led to more reliable support particularly with accommodation.

Both churches and mosques were instrumental in aiding resilience through practical and material support such as meals and clothes packages. Additionally, like Mya quoted at the beginning of this sub-section, the church created social contact and mitigated inactivity. Amelia also underscored that her involvement with church meant she could help others and contribute to her community;

“Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays I am in the church cleaning and preparing the alter for mass, I am a Catholic and then Tuesdays and Fridays I am with the Pastor at an Outreach Centre where we feed the homeless, do some counselling for them, give them more to eat and everything and maybe serve cups of tea to the people who come in for mass, so it keeps me going.” Amelia

Amelia’s association with the church had a transformative impact on her identity as she temporarily eluded the less desirable title of asylum-seeker in favour of a productive, socially-acceptable identity. This was juxtaposed against her secreted and even less desirable identity of ‘lesbian woman’ which she was resigned to hide in order to secure these other benefits. Amelia’s

involvement with the church enhanced her sense of but this was arguably negotiated as a pay off against disclosing of her identity as a gay woman;

“There is a group I attend called prayer group for young men and women so like we meet every, the first and the third Monday of the month, maybe we go to a pub or we go chatting or catching up or we are visiting members of the group and so no-one has bothered to ask me about my sexuality, and if they have not asked me why would I want to start talking about it? [...] I feel comfortable with them and they show so much support [...] I think that is why even I fear telling them that I am gay because I do not know how they would react to it, I would not want to destabilise the peace and the love they have for me. So it is better I keep it to myself. Maybe when the right time comes, I will tell them that I am gay, but as of now some things are better not said.” Amelia

Amelia’s experience evokes issues of identity, belonging and personal sacrifice. Her reluctance to disclose her true identity is ironic but perhaps understandable given that her outing as a gay woman in Uganda had necessitated her flight. One might argue that Amelia had escaped one compromising situation for another, the only difference being that her true identity was not yet disclosed. Colson (2003: 5) asserts that trust amongst refugee populations is strongest when people continue to maintain links with “a home place, a profession, or membership in some other grouping that spans localities and time”. Amelia’s attachment to the church essentially immersed her in a group that ‘spanned localities and time’ yet demanded a sacrifice - risk of losing this support was so great that compromising on her own truthfulness was a necessary precaution (Hynes, 2009). Sen (2006) argues that social capital depends both upon a shared identity and the exclusion of those who are Other. In withholding her true identity, Amelia was expressing a lack of trust in the church to welcome her regardless of her sexuality and protecting her disclosure as an Other, rendering a secret ‘Other within’. Considerations of religion and belongingness have suggested that while ideological faith and accepting metaphysical doctrines are perceived as the quintessence of religious engagement, the need to belong is often of even greater significance (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985; Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Amelia’s experience speaks of the fluctuating gains, losses and compromises that made up the complex and in some cases strategic negotiations of respondents with power infused social trajectories. Laura’s experience of being made a ‘church elder’ was equally power infused as it had honoured her as an older woman, endowing her with an authority and identity she might have known in Malawi. This was particularly poignant in view of Laura’s feelings of failure to adequately fulfil the role of grandmother given her status as a refused, destitute and disabled woman asylum-

seeker (Thompson and McRae, 2001). This helped improve Laura's self-esteem, a factor which is central to personal resilience (Davey et al., 2003).

The social nature of the church was also of significant benefit, as suggested by Mya quoted at the beginning of this sub-section. Mya also identified the church in helping manage enduring memories of detention. There is an implied spatial dimension to her account as the church provided a physical place to go every Sunday (Thompson and McRae, 2001). The social nature of church was also a significant feature of Haben's narrative of time in the UK as their shared faith and social grouping had led to her meeting and later marrying the friend of a friend.

"One of my friends she was detained with me and she get released before me [...] she talking about me in church and she told them to pray for me in detention, after that he heard and he came to visit me in YW and after I get released he married me." Haben

For Mary, her church had facilitated her broader contact with white 'English' people that she had otherwise been separated from;

"I have a church which I attend and when you get there you see these are white people, it is a white church but the people, the way they behave I have never seen that before. [...] They are much, much, much different. They are so nice, they are down to earth. [...] I have never seen a Christian white English person; I have seen this black whatever in London there but these ones are genuine, they are real." Mary

The church was a safe environment in which Mary could connect with white 'English' people, afforded by their shared religious faith and location in church. This provided opportunities to challenge negative preconceptions born from historic experiences of ill-treatment and differentiate between white people and what is 'genuine' and 'real'.

As well as the social, spatial and practical support, for many informants the church offered an outlet for emotional suffering and despair which had even mitigated suicide attempts;

"They have helped me to get my confidence back." Laura

“I was really thinking of imposing on myself, I was thinking to kill myself, even now I’m just depressed, I’m just thinking to kill myself. I’m just thinking of saving my god, of going to church, church people are helping me, if not I would have killed myself.” Tulisa

Faith in God was a key coping strategy and one that enhanced individual resilience by providing a mechanism by which the women could regain a sense of control and meaning previously lost to them (Schweitzer et al., 2007).

“What keep me going now? [...] The church, ‘cos when you go to the church they will advise you about everything, they tell you that you shouldn’t lose hope, that God is still there for you, God is going to do things, that everything that you have lost God will restore it back to us. So when you hear the word, that word of God that is the hope I get when you read the bible, hear some people about God’s truth, what you are going through so when you hear the word of God.” Janet

Janet echoes other work which highlights that strong positive belief can evoke the hope needed to cope with challenging situations (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Indeed Gladden (2012: 188) asserts that “religious beliefs often form the backbone of refugees’ beliefs about their situations, their futures, and their ability to make meaning out of the events that have taken place in their lives”. For these participants, the belief that God had a plan for them elicited great comfort and peace;

“Just thank God. When there is nowhere he puts me somewhere.” Mary

“I say “Father, what next? You guide me, use me, tell me”. So I cannot do that decision by myself, I can only pray to God to guide me and show me the way.” Bella

Just like other opportunities for social interaction a key barrier to regular contact with church, and in the case of Rupinder and Noreen mosques, was geographical proximity born from peripherally located NASS accommodation, travel costs and ill-health. Despite the great faith that many women had in God, the daily struggles sometimes placed a strain on these beliefs;

“Sometimes as a human being you’ve got to have logic and think and say “mm, what about this?” and think logically, how is God going to put things in control? And then you doubt especially when you come into difficult situations and then you say anyway, “God is here but

how is he to come and intervene with this?" [...] and then you say "is he really there? Come and intervene!"." Ella

FBOs were significant therefore in offering practical, social, emotional and spiritual support for many respondents and this helped to enhance individual resilience by enabling them to cope with everyday precarity. Although research emphasises the significant potential of FBO's political activity (Clope et al., 2009), participants' association with these were conspicuous in their apolitical nature. This meant that accounts of resistance or even reworking were lacking. While support from FBOs helped to ameliorate the challenges of everyday life this was hindered in part by the precarious conditions in which participants found themselves and for some accessing this support demanded personal sacrifices. In this next section I examine the role of charitable organisations and their role in facilitating acts of resilience, reworking and resistance.

### *8.2.2 Charitable organisations*

"This is the course if I need anything, anything. Anything I don't understand or don't know where to, I call the Centre, I have a support worker the same lady whom I ask her for anything I don't understand and she's always there, Leah. She has worked with me since I came to the Centre and every woman who comes to the Centre has someone to call." Jana

A network of charitable organisations acted as a significant key safety net which had helped most participants meet practical, legal, material, emotional and social needs all of which remained central to enhancing resilience. These organisations supported women when they were unable to meet their own needs, compensating for inadequate formal support systems and when women 'fell through the net' often after a change in legal status. Charitable support was not always consistent however as access depended upon location, inhibited by finite resources. I begin by unpacking the spatial specificity of these charities and the kinds of support that they offered respondents before moving on to consider how in a minority of cases this contact facilitated acts of reworking and resistance.

Participants were in contact with different charities across the UK (London, Dover, Manchester, Nottingham and Cardiff) and not necessarily where they lived. A minority of women maintained minimal contact via telephone or returned to attend periodic charity events after they had been dispersed or released from detention. In the main support was received from local charities which had different remits; some to refused asylum seekers, (ex)detainees or all forced migrants. Because

of dispersal, accessing charitable support was often based entirely on luck and local provision and contact was often facilitated by acquaintances or signposted by key workers. A minority however moved significant distances to be near to particular charities. Berdour applied to be relocated to alternative NASS accommodation in Manchester to be near a charity that assisted asylum-seekers with medical training to prepare for UK professional registration after gaining status. When Berdour's asylum case was rejected however, her support was rescinded and she became destitute. Berdour became dependent on another charity which accommodated her in a shared house and as she had no resources to pay for travel Berdour was forced to give up this specialist support and with it her hope of working as a doctor in the UK. Berdour's experience underscores the unstable and precarious nature of accessing charitable support and the irony that because of political and institutional barriers, those who are destitute and most in need often find it harder to access available support.

As a refused asylum-seeker, Tulisa's coping strategies depended upon charitable support and hypermobility;

"I went to Leicester they showed me some charities, they said they don't give the money they just give food, I said "how can I be living without money like that?" [...] I came to my friend, I was not feeling well, so she said "come to London, I know one place called [charity]". So I rang this lady, I was in Swansea by then, I rang this lady and [...] so she wrote to me and said, invited me to [charity], registered me at [charity], I came August 2010."

Tulisa

Tulisa had moved between three UK cities staying with friends and acquaintances while remaining in search of adequate charitable support. Tulisa's experience emphasises how word-of-mouth was key in transmitting information within migrant communities about available support and highlights the relatively more mobile nature of those who are destitute and therefore not tied to NASS accommodation. While Tulisa's existence was inherently precarious, fuelled by dependency on others and frequent moves, her strategic mobility was used to capitalise on available support demonstrating Tulisa's individual resilience. By remaining flexible and personally resourceful Tulisa had survived for a number of years and remained off the streets.

The type of support offered by charitable organisations varied. Some were specialised, offering legal representation, therapeutic support or assisting asylum-seekers source medical documentation to

support asylum claims. Others were more generalised, offering practical assistance (with translation, attending appointments and completing paperwork); social support (befriending, moral/emotional support); material support (food parcels, small grants, clothes and cosmetics); and educational support (English lessons and wellbeing courses). In order to unpack how charitable support enhanced individual resilience I want to focus on two key charities with which some participants had contact, drawing on interviews with charity workers.

The first organisation was originally set up by a London University and consisted almost entirely of student volunteers. While the support that recipients received depended upon the individual volunteer, most offered a comprehensive support system. A volunteer would visit a detainee in detention to offer social and moral support but when released this continued and in many cases was central to helping ex-detainees negotiate the transition from detention to the community. The support some volunteers offered was substantial, from writing letters, accompanying individuals to appointments and in a minority of cases accommodating them in their own homes. Others acted as personal referees for bail sureties which meant they were personally responsible if bail conditions were broken. These relationships were therefore built on significant trust and emotional investment. Speaking of their support workers Haben and Bella said;

“She helped me a lot when I want something, before I married she helped me with like my rent something, like treatment like my mum whatever I want, she go with me everything, when I have appointment she take me to appointment yeah she was my everything.” Haben

“My befriender very, very good girl she was visiting me almost every week if she can if she’s in town, helped me look for solicitor, look for lawyer, paper, enquiry about all, contact the children. I mean she really, really I call her my daughter because she’s twenty-five years old, I say oh my little daughter!” Bella

Both women highlight the practical importance of these volunteers and the familial identity they took on, compensating for respondents’ loss of family. Haben had been only 16 when she arrived and having lost her mother on her journey to the UK her befriender acted as a mother figure. This relationship between volunteer and respondent was complex and involved a dynamic negotiation of power. This extract from field notes considers the experience of one volunteer Theresa who supported an ex-detained couple, one of whom was a respondent.

“After we left the house Theresa said she always felt overwhelmed and sometimes suffocated by her contact with the couple which left her with conflicted feelings especially of guilt at not going often or for long enough and relief at leaving. While Theresa felt that she had become a family replacement, described as 'little sister' by the couple, she also felt an inadequate replacement as she was unable to fully fill the chasm created by the absence of 'real' family. The dynamic was complicated by pervasive feelings of dependency and indebtedness which the couple felt ill-equipped to ever repay. It transpired that Theresa and another volunteer had acted as guarantors for bail sureties. This meant the couple's 'freedom' was paid for by the volunteers in trust which they perhaps felt duty bound to return – with their welcome and often intense hosting in the home being one such currency.” Field notes, 10 Oct 2012

The relationship between Theresa, Rupinder and her husband was a complex one based upon mutual trust and fondness for one another, reinforced by their shared history and Theresa's grasp of Urdu. There was however a more covert dynamic at play between recipient and volunteer rooted in a sense of indebtedness.

The second charity was a Christian, Manchester-based organisation that offered a particularly comprehensive support from educational training, legal advice, social and cultural events, food packages, travel expenses and small grants. The charity ran a charity shop located in the same warehouse building where individuals could get material items and volunteer. Of greatest significance was their provision of accommodation, comprising a network of twelve houses around Manchester (three for refugees and nine for refused asylum-seekers) a winter night shelter for asylum-seeker men and a 'hosting' scheme. The latter consisted of approximately 30 individuals around Manchester with a spare room in which they accommodated destitute asylum-seekers for a week but sometimes up to a year.

A consequence of this attractive package of support was users' reluctance to apply for state-funded Section 4 support, as this could make them subject to dispersal. Anecdotal evidence by charity workers suggested that applying for Section 4 sometimes attracted undesirable UKBA attention, resulting in quicker decisions and consequently more timely removals. While participants' attempts to extricate themselves from the state's grip might be seen as an act of reworking, it required increased dependency upon charitable support. Furthermore remaining 'off the radar' only prolonged the precarity of their situation by putting off an active engagement with the asylum

system. The same charity worker highlighted however that because resources were tight, they could only support candidates who had the potential to progress effectively through the system and could not support individuals indefinitely whose claims were 'unwinnable' or who remained unmotivated to secure a positive status. This meant ensuring on-going support was dependent to some extent on conforming to the charity's conditions so kept women off the street but with little option but to comply with the UKBA.

The intensive support program offered was fundamental in enhancing individual resilience not just through direct personal training and practical support but because the charity offered a key spatial attachment and opportunities for belonging;

"I told them I have to stay in Manchester because I don't have anyone in Liverpool or Oldham or Bolton, no one – I am here. I am coming here because this is my family. I am talking with them I am sharing all things, I am not telling lies with them because they are good, they are supporting me. Like when I go home and just stay on my own with myself, I don't have any pressure, don't have any problem, my friends say "you can do this, you can do this"." Noreen

Research indicates that when opportunities to confront social and spatial barriers to inclusion are afforded through forging social and political spaces, migrants are able to enhance a sense of belonging and place-attachments (Nelson and Hiemstra, 2008: 320). Noreen's attachment to this charity enriched a spatially specific sense of belonging, strengthened also by familial attachments and expressed through a determination to remain connected (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, Mellor et al., 2008). It is also recognised however that for these interactions to augment a sense of belonging they must be sustained and revisited, something only possible through close geographical proximity. This explains Noreen's determination to remain in the region of Manchester where the charity was located. Cumbers et al (2010: 60) note that reworking differs from resilience by "reflecting people's attempts to create spaces that can improve their conditions of existence" and which "involves a greater level of consciousness of the underlying conditions of oppression, although like resilience does not necessarily lead to action that challenges hegemonic power". The spatial specificity of Noreen's attachment to the charity and its role in meeting her immediate needs constituted an example of reworking, underscoring its spatial and social nature.

Involvement with charities also enhanced the connections that women felt to their physical, geographical sites, not least because social places are central to the construction of belonging, afford a stability of self and facilitate a connection to a larger emotional and social collective (Anthias, 2006: 21). Charities and the individuals that made them were shown therefore to afford a fundamental attachment to and sense of place which ultimately provided feelings of habituation, acceptance and rest, characteristics perceived as prerequisites to resilience (Munt, 2012).

“To come somewhere where you are believed [...] and treated like a human being it’s not, it’s very simple. And people get that when people say “oh, it’s like home, it’s my home” that’s what they get. They walk in the door and clock faces and the way people speak to you, you’re another human being and not a bogus asylum-seeker to be just dispensed with as they see fit.” Leah, charity worker

This charity worker highlights that charities were home for some women that used them, sustained through their recognition as human beings. This resonates with the discussion of a human verses criminal discourse in Chapter Eight and speaks of the role that some charities played not only in disrupting damaging stereotypes. They also provided a space in which women could connect with others who often knew them intimately, with the assurance that someone was there to offer assistance with everyday challenges.

Charitable involvement also provided opportunities to maintain contact with others in different parts of the country by attending meetings and conferences as charities would often pay for travel. These were unusual however as with the exception of Tulisa who was exceptionally mobile on account of destitution and pursuit therefore of charitable support and accommodation, the other women’s lives were after dispersal highly circumscribed within the localised places of home and immediate neighbourhoods (Spicer, 2008: 507).

“I do go there sometimes when I have a meeting because they, last time they took me, people elected me to represent them on the board, so I’m on the board of the Trust so when I have a board meeting, that’s when I go there.” Laura

Laura’s involvement on the board of an HIV/AIDS charity was significant in acknowledging and utilising her many skills that were otherwise undervalued. An event frequented by several

respondents was an annual conference held in London specifically on the needs of ex-detainees organised by a Dover-based charity. Speaking of the conference Amelia said;

“In the conference I was so much shocked to hear people have been signing for fifteen years for twenty years and there is not any breakthrough. They are things I did not know, by attending the conference I got to know and maybe we can all talk about what we are going through and the Government gets to know what we are going through, maybe they can make it better for the people who are coming after.” Amelia

The conference was an important forum for sharing stories and hearing about others in similar (and worse off) situations. This helped Amelia gain some perspective, reduce isolation and motivate her to keep going, representing an example of reworking.

This section has examined the role of institutional support in helping respondents cope with the precarity of everyday life particularly through enhancing individual resilience and some examples of reworking. An important theme identified from these accounts was the imbrication of the ‘everyday’ with acts of resilience.

### 8.3 The resilience of everydayness

“First thing, keep yourself busy, try to involve with different organisations, volunteering work, friends, not to sit home. I’m trying to be full all week and at the weekend I’ll be so tired I want to rest and sleep so I just go there and there, try to keep yourself busy not to think.” Berdour

The concept of resilience has been criticised not least because reductionist interpretations propagate notions of an exclusively internal capacity that remains distinct from the external social world in which the individual is situated and articulates with. Accordingly, the social world can be portrayed merely as the site of adversity which excludes the possibility that resilience is a social phenomenon (Lenette et al., 2012). Participants’ narratives evoked the everyday as a key but incongruous site not only on which acts of resilience played out, but as a mode of resilience itself by which the challenges of precarity mitigated (Allen, 2008; Lenette et al., 2012), resonating with feminist interests with the everyday (Dyck, 2005).

A mechanism used to overcome the challenges of daily life was adapting routines to make use of resources and create a productive rhythm, constituting an everyday resilience that helped mitigate precarity. These routines were shaped by external factors such as the provision of charitable organisations;

“I get clothes through charity, like Red Cross, I go to charity all this I get from [charity] here [*gestures to the clothes she is wearing*] we have clothes, they give us clothes, every Monday come and Thursday, I go to charity on Tuesday I will go there, I go for clothes, like this bag [*hold up her handbag*]. Cosmetics, they give us in Wapping they provide monthly packs, like sanitary package [...] there’s a church we go every once a month and they give us toiletry package, they give us Vaseline, Intensive Vaseline care so I have, every Monday take them there, soap, shower gel...” Tulisa

Tulisa’s weekly routine constituted a kind of urban foraging that required both an informed familiarity with available resources and personal motivation. This activity was essential to her survival as a destitute asylum-seeker with little alternative support. Rowe and Wolch (1990: 198) observe that for homeless women, deprivations of everyday life demanded revised priorities as the “recursive relationship between the daily path and life path is thus altered, as immediate priorities supersede the priorities of the life path”. While Tulisa’s life was certainly preoccupied with survival she also kept in mind her longer-term future and was motivated by securing positive immigration status.

Respondents’ canny use of charitable and FBO provision not only met basic material needs but also kept them physically and emotionally active as Berdour’s quote suggests at the beginning of this section. This strategy helped to regulate mental health and alleviate a sense of stagnation by blocking out emotions and bringing on sleep. Routines were also influenced by the UKBA for example through signing on and curfews. While there were unquestionable limitations to this, there was also evidence of this being harnessed for personal gain as in Janet’s case discussed in Chapter Five. Others demonstrated resourcefulness by adaptation patterns of consumption to fit a particular routine and maximising on available assets, such as free meals whilst volunteering.

As observed in detail above, informal and institutional support provided opportunities to overcome everyday challenges brought about by multiple deprivation. While understated in some cases, these more subtle adaptations that emerged as features of everyday life were clear demonstrations of

agency and resilience, such as personal flexibility and resourcefulness (Nguyen-Gillham et al., 2008; Pulvirenti and Mason, 2011; Lenette et al., 2012). This quotidian resilience was further exhibited through personal resources which research suggests are key to everyday coping strategies, including personality variables and hope for the future (Gladden, 2012). Berdour and Mary whom had both secured refugee status, were noticeably positive about their time in the UK and identified the opportunities these experiences afforded;

“Sometimes I think it’s not bad really experience, somehow it’s, you learn, you learn things from this situation, from this experience. You learn how not to give up, you struggle to prove yourself, to try to change yourself, to make a change. It’s a good experience really [...] You lose many things, you sacrifice many things but at the end it’s an experience.” Berdour

“I think it has been a terrible thing but on the other hand I would say it has been positive because I have learnt a lot, I learned how to behave myself, I have learned to treat other people the way people should be treated.” Mary

Similarly, Haben compared her life to the less fortunate people still navigating the Sahara as she had once done;

“I don’t mind even if I don’t have anything, I sleep on the floor only and I’m thinking I’m sleeping on really nice furniture, understand what I’m saying? Because people sleeping on the rough in the Sahara, people dying with nothing, like two weeks they not food or drink and they die.” Haben

Reflecting on her relatively privileged position had helped Haben develop a personal strategy for coping with the hardships of being an asylum-seeker. Laura conveyed an emotional coping strategy which combined self-blame and hope;

“You don’t feel angry that’s the secret of this, you just feel sorry for yourself that you’re not having the freedom which other people are having because if you feel angry, at whom? In the first place, I trespassed but after trespassing I went through courts, I paid through courts, through going to detention. Why should they send me back after going through all this? So you just become more stronger now, whatever happens I will still remain here because I’ve been through so many hardships.” Laura

Laura's resolve is significant considering the prolonged nature of her uncertain status and destitute existence. While Laura did not necessarily engage in tangible acts of resilience, her determination was central to a quiet, everyday resilience which was demonstrated through a refusal to give up.

Other scholarship identifies that a focus on education can help forced migrants reframe negative experiences and redefine a hopeful outlook on the future (Goodman, 2004; Gladden, 2012). This was reiterated by respondents who equally associated employment with coping.

“When you are working you plan a lot of things, a lot of opportunities in this country, school, courses I want to do. When I go to internet, see so many courses which is good, it helped me [...] I really want to work with old people and also when I look at things I focus my mind.”

Tulisa

Tulisa's future plans helped 'focus her mind' on productive aims, and alleviate the stress and uncertainty of her lived present. Silove (2004: 22) asserts that when provided with opportunities to develop personal capacities and participate in society, asylum-seekers may overcome major adversities but when “marginalized, victimized, or constrained, they tend to become entrapped in negative stereotypic roles that are self-reinforcing, leading to further persecution and deprivation.” This astute observation resonated with participants' experiences. Ella for example identified the benefits of study;

“I really studied for some time [...] I got friends 'cos my aim was to get friends so that, because the world had become so squeezed so that I wanted to bring back my life which really helped me because I could get friends there at college and I could go out, I became busy.” Ella

This social contact helped Ella combat feelings of claustrophobia, facilitating a re-expansion and reconceptualisation of her everyday world. Marlowe (2009: 142-3) perceptively observes that whilst Western-based psychosocial interventions have a place, other everyday priorities such as housing are often of greater priority and when resolved have significant facility in minimising everyday stress. Addressing the root causes of precarity such as inactivity through the pursuit of meaningful, purposeful activity through charitable organisations supporting asylum-seekers' individual resilience. While there is not the scope to interrogate this here, it should be noted that participants also relied

upon various formal stakeholders such as solicitors and medical professionals which was instrumental also to their resilience.

Having examined the everyday as site of resilience, the next section turns to examine more overt examples of reworking and resistance facilitated by charitable involvement.

#### 8.4 Acts of resistance and reworking

“I got the counselling from this Centre [...] from the staff here and from the women who have been through the same, the [self-help group] who’ve been through the same things really, they tell a story and you see how far they’ve gone and how far they, how strong they’ve been, fighting... that we’ve seen the strength to fight on.” Jana

Katz (2004: 251) asserts that resistance amongst marginalised groups is rare as it requires “the invocation of an oppositional consciousness”. Some participants’ involvement with charitable organisations afforded opportunities to engage in acts of resistance which helped them glean a sense of control and strive to affect change. Bailey (2012) argues that community organisations are key for understanding the trajectory of African migrant women’s exercise of agency. Inextricable from this is a process of belonging and identity as only when a minority group finds itself marginalised is it motivated to ‘reconfigure’ itself by contesting the ‘cultural constellation of identity/difference’ (Anthias, 2006: 55).

One London-based women’s centre with which three participants had contact was particularly active and known for its political activism and remaining publically outspoken on women’s issues. The Centre was home to a number of projects and groups which were politically motivated and set on effecting political change, one of which was a self-help group for (ex)detained women. As well as supporting women in detention ex-detainees met at the Centre once a month to support one another; sharing stories, advice and offering emotional and practical support. They were also politically active.

“It is a self-help group and you’ve been through almost the same thing so we help with each other through the experiences we’ve been through from the hurdles you’ve been through [...] We just sit here and talk of their place “you have to do this and write this letter, make a case summary, make an appointment with your MP” [...] and we have mothers, like how I launched the campaign for mothers to be reunited with their children [...] and since the

campaign we've had like five women being reunited with their children. I was the first but there are some other women still fighting." Jana

This self-help group served multiple purposes, from enabling acts of resilience i.e. providing moral support; reworking i.e. contacting MPs; and resistance i.e. active campaigning and political lobbying. The self-help group provided a space in which the members transitioned from being victims to active agents, indeed victors. Community activism is known to be "strongly related to well-being, especially neighborhood sense of control and mastery, which are important for empowerment" (Gilster, 2012: 779), indeed for Jana it was a great source of pride which was reflected in her interchangeable use of 'they' and 'we' when speaking of collective victories. This afforded a constant, collective identity that "anchors the individual identity and does so in ways that positively orient the self toward psychological well-being" (Thompson and McRae, 2001: 45). Not only was the self-help 'arena' was a safe and contained environment, it also generated momentum which was channelled and projected out into the public realm in the form of political resistance, rewarded with tangible gains such as being reunited with family.

Jana also emphasised the position of strength that women secured through their involvement in the self-help group;

"Women are fighters. It's not like they sit back, it's not like they are weak [...] They really go a mile to help themselves and when they get the support it really makes it easier [...] that's how women manage to come out of detention, though sometime claimed bogus they become victorious [...] We've come to know that you need to know what you want a solicitor to do for you and tell them. When you tell them on the phone they don't act, put it in writing and 'cc' it to the group so that the solicitor knows people watching him, then things start moving. That's what women have learnt. And they've won, we've won." Jana

Jana's example of putting pressure on solicitors highlights a key example of reworking, utilising the existing legal framework to demand robust representation thus reclaiming power through active agency. This resonates with Foucault's understanding of power being born not only from inclusion but exclusion, and the complex interchange that may occur for individuals occupying a place of translocational positioning (Bailey, 2012).

Leah, a charity worker at the Centre and incidentally Jana's support worker, reiterated the active agency of women which was cultivated by developing new capacities and drawing on historical skills and experiences;

"Women have been organisers, you know back home they've run families they've campaigned they've been political activists they've organised to get out here, sort out what's happened to their children all kinds of stuff and it's really awful how little that is acknowledged, the expertise and lack of respect to women asylum-seekers as anything other than victims. What it means is that people can start to feel more autonomous and start to have a different, start to think "well, if I can start to have a relationship with my lawyer like that maybe my GP shouldn't speak to me like that." Leah, charity worker

Leah highlights the transformational potential that (re)claiming power had for some users, facilitating a change in identity, entitlement, and autonomy as well as attitudes towards authority figures. Jana echoed this transformation, noting an emotional and psychological shift that even superseded 'undesirable' immigration status.

"When you haven't won your case you even fear the police on the street, it's as if they are coming for you... I don't have a voice, I don't have a stay here, I don't have a status I don't have a say. But having said that, before I won my case when I joined the group I got to know that I have a say even if I don't have a status, that's one of the things that the group helped with. I could say "no" when I wanted to say no, I could say "I don't want it" if I feel I don't want to. Before then I had that fear of knowing well I'm a foreigner, I can't say no, I can't say my mind." Jana

This account highlights a powerful shift in Jana's consciousness, which speaks to Katz's (2004) 'oppositional consciousness' at the core of resistance subjectivities. This transformation had transcended the self-help group itself and altered Jana's perception of and engagement with wider UK society. This was significant given the long-term erosion of self-worth and voicelessness that the years as an ex-detained asylum-seeker woman had reinforced. This had granted Jana a sense of entitlement to undermine a key source of precarity by challenging authority and directly responding to the fear of the state's real and imagined reach within the community. While connections to

mental health were not made explicit, Jana's renewed autonomy and identity as a 'fighter' had undoubtedly enhanced her wellbeing greatly<sup>45</sup>.

There are interesting parallels in Leah's representation of asylum-seeker women as unequivocally resistant and the lexicon also employed by Jana, a longstanding member of the self-help group. This conveyed a strong discourse of resistance which infused the charity's organisational and political culture generated within the group as both product and process. This culture was reinforced by shared language, active political campaigning and the self-help format but also cultivated by the encouraged dynamic between service-users and charity workers;

"It's a chance to have a different kind of relationship because we don't want to have the kind of victim and 'lady-bountiful' relationship which is just really gross! We want to, as much as is possible despite the terrible disparity between our situations to try and be colleagues [...] that's why it's really important that we try to make sure that everyone has the information so that we can be given direction [...] that women are in a position to challenge us as well." Leah, charity worker

This charity sought through its political organisational culture to challenge negative stereotypes of women as victims by reinscribing a rhetoric of resistance and strength. This was complex as despite the undoubted advantages particularly enhancing autonomy and confidence, the alternative rhetoric appeared equally dominant and unconditional. Indeed, members appeared to have little choice but to subscribe to the group's ethos, which raised ethical concerns. To what extent were individuals prepared to compromise their own subjectivities in order to conform to a deeply political and at times inflexible culture to secure support? Tyler (2006: 195) notes the dangers of humanitarian organisations speaking for the Other and in doing so stifling asylum-seekers' voices whilst reinscribing a certain identity politics. In contrast, members of the self-help group had perhaps become the mouthpieces for the charity's 'cultural and political fantasies'<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Jana's commitment is also significant given that the centre had helped her resist dispersal.

<sup>46</sup> I must make clear that through this discussion I do not wish to recast all members as passive nor assume they were all beguiled into conformity, only to highlight the problematic nature of a prevailing rhetoric of resistance which left no room for differentiated subjectivities and by nature of needing to ensure continued support, were possibly left vulnerable.

While accessing respondents' genuine perceptions of this political organisational culture was problematic<sup>47</sup>, my experience as volunteer and researcher at the Centre provided a key access point. This complex and power-infused interchange revealed something of the political nature of these charitable spaces. This resonates with Pessar and Mahler's (2003: 818) reading of Massey's (1994) power geometry in which they propose a 'gendered geographies of power' which is "a framework for analysing people's gendered social agency - corporal and cognitive - given their own initiative as well as their positioning within multiple hierarchies of power operative within and across many terrains". This speaks of the power which flows within and between such organisations that migrants negotiate. Szczepanikova (2010: 461) has observed the micropolitics of non-governmental refugee organisations in the Czech Republic which construct specific gendered identities through the feminisation of 'refugeeness'. The negotiations that my participants underwent with this charity were an apparent antithesis of Szczepanikova's observations, recasting notions of resistance which fortified problematic binaries. Indeed as Pulvirenti and Mason (2011: 46 cited in Lenette et al., 2012) assert, refugee women are 'more than victims' but also 'more than survivors'. This occludes nuanced experiences and overlooks the oscillating, everyday negotiations that participants underwent, not least acts of resilience and reworking as exemplified through everyday spaces. It is also noteworthy that responses categorised as resilience and reworking still provide significant scope for the cultivation of consciousness and resistance. Katz (2004) develops Benjamin's concept of mimetic faculty which refers to a reflexive capacity that connects knowing and doing; that consciousness or knowing can evolve through everyday 'doing' in the social realm and which may facilitate responses to hegemonic formations (Aitken et al., 2006). This suggests the potential for everyday resilience and reworking as modes of doing that can lead to knowing, particularly through the reinforcement of social interaction (Hackett, 2013).

### *8.5 Chapter conclusions*

This chapter has interrogated participants' responses to precarity, borrowing from Katz's useful framework. While charitable involvement afforded some opportunities to develop an oppositional consciousness which might qualify as resistance, the majority of respondents' demonstrated acts of resilience and reworking not least through the everyday. These responses existed on ostensibly social trajectories with participants identifying various strategies for making use of a network of informal and institutional support. Precarity has been viewed not only as a condition but a possible

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<sup>47</sup> Not least because of the surveillant dynamic of the research setting as discussed in Chapter 3.

point of mobilisation for resistance and organisation (Waite, 2009). While this has been evident in political activism as a response to precarious work conditions there is potential for conceptualising responses to everyday precarity. These responses were however less than straightforward. In the first instance, a focus on respondents' social support revealed how these were conduits for nuanced acts of resilience, reworking and resistance, operating through the everyday. Despite challenging contexts some participants were able to mitigate precarity through overt acts of resistance to the resilience of 'everydayness'. However, factors which remained implicit to these very social trajectories sometimes interfered and undermined attempts, included poverty, lack of trust and state interventions. Indeed, the social trajectories which facilitated participants' responses were equally conduits of precarity, reinvigorating the challenges they sought to resist. The fluctuating and evolving nature of these social interactions further endorses a focus on the everyday which highlights the inadequacies of resilient/non-resilient, victim/fighter binaries (Pulvirenti and Mason, 2011; Lenette et al., 2012) which risk essentialising these complex negotiations.

At the beginning of this thesis I outlined the significant influence that Agamben's (2005; 1998) conceptualisations have had on geographers' thinking about detention and the sovereign abandonment of particular groups in society. Whilst influential these theorisations have been criticised, not least by feminists who have taken issue with Agamben's neglect of the gendered nature of sovereign abandonment, the absolute characterisation and undifferentiated white, male *homo sacer* and the unaccommodated acts of resilience by those rendered 'bare life' (Mountz, 2013). In seeking a different framework to accommodate the multiple subjectivities of the women in this study I have proposed a discourse of precarity. This chapter develops this proposition by offering this discourse as a theoretical landscape on which the themes discussed throughout this thesis might be situated and consolidated, accommodating in particular participants' differentiated encounters with home. I begin by unpacking the concept of precarity, tracing it from its neologistic roots to its more contemporary applications and drawing particularly on Judith Butler's (2006; 2009) distinction between precariousness and precarity. In the second section I trace key connections between precariousness and a home-infused political rhetoric and in the third identify the material and performative dimensions of home in proliferating everyday precarity. The fourth section draws out the fundamental concept of differential inclusion while the fifth and sixth sections address the imbrication of precarity with emotional wellbeing and everyday resilience respectively. By way of conclusion the seventh section proposes a dual response; in the first instance a theoretical, ethical proposition and in the second practical recommendations for reducing everyday precarity as explicated by participants. Section eight outlines research limitations and avenues for future research, before offering some final thoughts in section nine.

### 9.1 A 'state of precarity'

The application and meaning of 'precarity' has varied significantly, from specific working conditions (in the main), to a generalised condition of society (in the minority). Waite (2009) provides a useful summary of the term's evolution noting that its usage has historically been most common in France from Bourdieu's (1963) early address of permanent versus casual workers, to later work on poverty and employment (Offredi, 1988; Pitrou, 1978). Geographers amongst others have continued to investigate precarity in relation to post-industrial societies and the conditions that these labour markets have created for individuals working in them (Waite, 2009). The term 'precariat' has also been developed by activist Amamiya Karin (2007) to identify the 'precarious proletariat' in Japan, a

group relegated to irregular and unstable employment. Importantly precarity is identified as both a condition and rallying point for mobilisation and resistance. This political potential has been exemplified in social movement struggles, with 'precarity' finding its way into anti-capitalist rhetoric and social justice movements (Gibson-Graham, 1996). These social movements are similar in their inclusion of migrant workers and emphasis on insecure labour conditions as a catalyst for precarity. Waite (2009) observes however that while the word precarity has grown in favour and applicability the condition of precarity has remained ubiquitous in the Global south for some time, representing the normative experience of the global majority.

Contemporary engagements with precarity have found a more pervasive application, indeed Barbier (2002: 1 cited in Waite, 2009: 517) has asserted that "[h]uman life is quintessentially transitory [...] Uncertainty and contingency are at the heart of the human condition". While still dwelling on precarious employment, Allison (2012) coins the term 'social precarity' which she argues has a destabilising effect on daily life. Allison asserts that "precarity is insecurity in life: material, existential, social", indeed she suggests that precarity infects the 'soul' which is "rooted in both the material conditions of life-making, including work, and the social and existential conditions of living, including the ties we have with others and the ways we define (and find) meaning, energy, and worth" (349). This echoes work by Molé (2012) who argues that precarious labour may evoke pathological symptoms that 'haunt' one's very being. While Allison is concerned with the aftermath of the Tsunami on Japanese society, her expansive interpretation of how precarity can both infuse and be born from the fabric of daily life resonates with the everyday lives of my participants. In line with conventional interpretations, Allison identifies that not only is social precarity a condition faced by individuals in Japanese society after the Tsunami, it was a catalyst for resistance. Although Allison's (2012) investigation centres upon the widespread impact of work-related conditions her apprehension of the ubiquitous nature of 'social precarity' highlights the conceptual potential to uncover the wide-reaching impact of precarity on daily life and wellbeing. She observes the co-contingent nature of social precarity and the negative implications for wellbeing, in particular the erosion of identity, belonging and capacity to create home. This speaks to my respondents' narratives who also faced the social, financial, material and political consequences of uncertain immigration status.

Equally concerned with a broader interpretation of precarity, Butler's (2006; 2009) extensive conceptualisations have existed discretely from debates on labour conditions. She has grappled instead with the specificity of ontological inquiries, introducing a key distinction between

'precariousness' and 'precarity'. While precariousness defines the corporeal vulnerability shared by all humans, precarity speaks of the exclusive vulnerability endured by the poor, subjugated and disenfranchised minority (Watson, 2012). Agamben's construction of bare life depends upon oscillating and mobile boundaries which distinguishes between bare life and politically qualified life, which Gregory (2006: 406) notes is to make *all* life precarious. Whilst this marks a tentative connection between Agamben and Butler, an important distinction is that Butler does not appear convinced of bare life. Indeed in his blog, Stanescu (2010) observes that Butler's precariousness is not a "condition to be overcome or critiqued, in the way that bare life would be for Agamben, rather precariousness becomes a place to think and organize from". He also observes that while Agamben is concerned with the 'metaphysical machines that produce modernity' and which contrive zones of indistinction, Butler's is preoccupied with the nuances which decide which lives are considered livable and mournable and drills down into how we determine what is human. Unlike Agamben, Butler explores this in relation to gender, race, sexuality and ability which underpin the protocols by which we determine which lives we mourn, and which we do not. Butler's conceptualisation of precarity therefore offers significant productive potential for unpacking the experiences of my respondents.

Although Butler centres her investigation upon the US post 9/11 her interrogations are more broadly applicable, demarcating key axes of difference and commonality. Because corporeal fragility is experienced by all, the experience of precariousness simultaneously equalises and differentiates. The unequal distribution of precarity however is because some bodies are more vulnerable and some more protected. Butler's answer to this inequality is not an endeavour to 'empower' the disenfranchised but an acknowledgment of vulnerability to violence by those who refute their own precariousness. In other words, those who impose precarity on others must first recognise their own precariousness which is in essence their own mortality (Butler, 2009: xxv). Butler asserts that when faced with violence, and therefore its own precariousness, the nation-state rushes to 'immunise' itself against this threat through exhibitions of violence. By circumventing reactive responses through an earlier acknowledgement of vulnerability, violence and exacerbating reactions may be avoided as to deny this vulnerability "can fuel the instruments of war" (Butler, 2006: 29).

For Butler therefore, shared vulnerability is the core of precariousness and motivates universal nation-states to immunise themselves against it, a response that Esposito (2010) cited by Butler has coined an 'immunisation response'. Esposito argues that "[l]ife is sacrificed to the preservation of life. In this convergence of the preservation of life and its capacity to be sacrificed, modern

immunization reaches the height of its own destructive power” (Butler, 2009: 14). Speaking of the existence of Nazi concentration camps, Esposito suggests that the response of modern liberal regimes to the threat of violence is often to expel and/or contain any internal threat. This evokes and encourages a biopolitical rhetoric which presents the nation as a body under attack and legitimises (at times extreme) measures taken to protect it. Indeed, Watson (2012) observes that “this strain of biopolitics thus addresses the conundrum posed by modern liberalism: the preservation of life tends to take the form of allowing, threatening, or imposing death”. This is exemplified most clearly in the ‘preventative’ war on terror which “constitutes the most acute point of this autoimmunitary turn of contemporary biopolitics” (Esposito, 2008: 147). Like Butler, Esposito demands a shift towards an ‘affirmative biopolitics’ which would take fuller stock of its intrinsic vulnerability and in doing so invert the immunitary paradigm (Watson, 2012).

Crucial characteristics of Butler’s (2009) ontological investigations are the relational and power-infused nature of precarity and precariousness, orchestrated within the social and political realm. This is because ‘being’ exists within or in relation to some kind of social and political organisation and is constructed in relation to norms and to others. Because of this social ontology, life is always precarious because it is always in one way or another ‘in the hands of the other’, indeed Butler asserts,

“It implies exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all. Reciprocally, it implies being impinged upon by the exposure and dependency of others, most of whom remain anonymous. These are not necessarily relations of love or even of care, but constitute obligations towards others, most of whom we cannot name and do not know, and who may or may not bear traits of familiarity to an established sense of who ‘we’ are” (2009: 14).

While Butler is speaking of an ontology which connects us all, my respondents have highlighted the heightened significance of social support systems to those who are most vulnerable and who Butler isolates as differentially ‘precarious’. Indeed, this dynamic breeds further precarity for those who are most in need, leaving them more susceptible to abuse and exploitation. While precarity as opposed to precariousness is defined as the differential exposure to suffering and violence, Harker (2012: 20) notes that the delineation of this ‘differential’ nature remains unclear and proposes instead a *geographical* framing in response to what she perceives as Butler’s historic omission of a spatial perspective. The adoption of a spatio-temporal framing allows therefore for the contestation of discursive categorisations of individuals living a precarious life and sanctions emergent accounts of resilience. This is augmented by geographers like Findlay (2005: 429) who through a coalescence of

vulnerability with precarity propose 'vulnerable spatialities' which asserts the 'spatial context' must be conceptualised as contingent on spatial variables. One way in which this potential may be realised is through a critical focus on home.

Harker's observations are useful then in foregrounding a geographical focus when unpacking and extending Butler's hugely influential work. In seeking to elucidate the everyday precarity of my participants as ex-detained women of varying immigrations statuses, the next two sections take up a scaled reading of their encounters with home in order to offer a spatial investigation of what Butler perceives as differential exposure to a 'precarious life'. In the first, I emphasise the centrality of a homeland discourse. Esposito's (2008: 147) emphasises that the response of 'Global North' nation-states to perceived vulnerability is to expel and/or contain any internal threat. While this biopolitical rhetoric presents the nation as a body under attack, the reframing of the nation as home through a homeland discourse which has come to represent a powerful and pervasive political rhetoric (Walters, 2004). For Butler, this both constructs and perpetuates a generalised fear and vulnerability (enhancing a more pervasive precariousness) as well as legitimising violent responses to those perceived as the threat (manifesting precarity for this marginalised minority). The complex significance of home is revealed further in the following section which explores how materially and performatively, home remained strategic in the implementation of these autoimmunitary responses.

## 9.2 A homeland discourse

Geographers note that the trend within political and academic discourses to reframe the 'nation-as-home' has gained particular momentum since 9/11 (Manning, 2003). This has however relied upon a perpetual state of emergency and further propagated insecurity (Agamben, 1998; 2005) that has been effective in legitimising stringent measures taken to protect the 'homeland' from attack (Kaplan, 2003; Walters, 2004; Valdez, 2010). A key example of this is the portrayal of detention practices as protective measures against intrusion despite the dehumanising and implicit abjuration of liberty for detainees. This has resulted in a criminalisation agenda which while strengthening the demonisation of certain groups in society, has further fortified representations of the nation-as-home (Kaplan, 2003). A domopolitical agenda is co-imblicated with an Othering framework therefore because the former underpins what is 'ours' and justifies the measures taken to protect it against the latter, what is foreign and a threat. Furthermore, as illustrated throughout this thesis, the centrality of home is further expounded through the strategic use of the home to meet domopolitical ends. This, Darling (2009) argues, results in the British government sovereign abandonment of migrants to the ethical sensibilities of others, revealed through my participants'

everyday microgeographies embroiled with the home. This included sleeping on friends' floors or being forced to exchange sex for shelter or food.

Of central import to a domopolitical agenda then is the abjected Other which serves the purpose of reifying that which we are not and ascertaining the boundaries of our own normality (Grove and Zwi, 2006). Butler (1993: 3) also relies upon this to construe the construction of what is 'ours', indeed she notes that the "exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires a simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects", but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject". This is regulated through biopolitical technology which seeks to safeguard the healthy body politic of the host community against the invasion of external parasites that might want to invade it. Considering the UK's immigration policy, Zylinska (2004: 530) notes that migrants and asylum-seekers are paradoxically consigned to the margins of society and defined by their liminal status, while being judged on their willingness to integrate in a host community which simultaneously excludes them and relies upon this exclusion to confirm its own identity in relation, or even opposition, to what threatens it. Othering is central moreover to a sense of belonging for both local populations and migrants alike, though for asylum-seekers this is often problematically epitomised by disenfranchisement. This framework suggests that efforts to integrate and belong are futile unless the receiving country chooses to accept new arrivals. While my participants' narratives attest to these challenges and the dangers of absorbing this abjected identity, they also demonstrated endeavours to resist this and enter into a new kind of identity politics through which they articulated a place for themselves in the UK. An example is the 'still human' discourse which served as a direct response to Agamben's framing of bare life.

As the centrality of home emerges in the production of generalised precariousness through a homeland discourse and the concurrent reliance upon the abjected subject, we also begin to witness the emergent co-contingent precarity of the Other. This Othering dynamic is of equal import to the construction of precarity as it is through this that certain individuals are subjected to specific vulnerabilities. Indeed, this vulnerability is both justified and perpetuated by a homeland discourse as it legitimatises stringent protective measures. In order to further illuminate how home is imbricated in the conceptual construction of the Other and their precarity, I return once again to Butler and Esposito whose explanations are embroiled with a biopolitical rhetoric which underscores why some individuals are marginalised and disenfranchised in society. In *Antigone's Claim*, Butler (2000) evokes the mythological figure of Antigone who through her defamation of King Oedipus becomes performatively transformed into a 'political zombie'; rendered a non-person that is

corporeally living but socially dead and who for Butler represents those excluded in contemporary society who are not only stateless or prisoners of war but “new immigrants, the sans-papiers, those who are without health insurance, those who are differentially affected by the global economy, questions of poverty, of illiteracy, religious minorities, and the physically challenged” (Antonello and Farneti, 2009 cited in Watson, 2012). Indeed, Antigone “allegorizes the fragile subject downtrodden by a hegemonic collective” who is denied entry into the community proper which is itself constructed upon these immunitary expulsions and exclusions (Watson, 2012). In reading Butler, Watson observes that conceptually in society there are more punitive ways of living beyond the extremes of death “in the sphere of the excluded” (Butler, 2000: 81). While Butler lacks an explicitly spatial framing, the notion of a ‘sphere of the excluded’ has distinctly spatial connotations and offers some conceptual merit for discerning my respondents’ experiences and their negotiations with home.

In a more contemporary geographical consideration of the UK’s institutional landscape that excluded migrant Others negotiate, Gedalof (2007) considers the White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Havens* (Home Office, 2002). Reiterating Zylinska (2004) above, she identifies the challenges of migrants’ integration given that this is dependent upon the UK-born population who are in turn reliant upon migrants’ continued abjection to define their own identity. Gedalof is further preoccupied with how gendered concepts of the home, family and belonging are inscribed and actuated within contemporary cultural and political discourses about migrant communities. She argues that the highly restricted nature of everyday life reflects the attempts of the state to circumscribe their involvement in society. Gedalof coins this a ‘no leaks’ discourse which she asserts emerges from immigration policy and its ultimate ambitions to create a ‘seamless asylum process.’ The successful implementation of this seamlessness plays out not only where asylum-seekers are positioned within society, but what their rights and entitlements are and how these are lived out. As my respondents have revealed, this includes where they lived and to what extent they were able to go about their everyday lives. This was influenced by dispersal policies, curfews, NASS accommodation regulations and multiple deprivation.

The home therefore remains ubiquitous within political discourses of asylum control which is important to the construction of generalised precariousness and simultaneously implicit to reinforcing precarity for those individuals perceived as a threat. This is because, as my respondents suggest, political rhetoric had real life consequences. Crucially, this rhetoric is translated into everyday life through asylum legislation, in particular that concerned with housing. The past two

decades have seen growing restrictions to the housing entitlements of migrants [see Appendix 5 for a more detailed analysis of this legislation]. The Asylum and Immigration Act (2004) set out new rules which attached individuals indefinitely to their dispersal area even after being granted positive status by limiting their eligibility for support to the local authority to which they had been dispersed. This policy continues to undermine the control that those granted status have over their geographies, forced to remain in areas which might be undesirable.

When framed within a discourse of precarity, UK asylum legislation may be perceived as an attempt to internally manage a source of perceived political instability. Indeed, Pearl and Zetter's (2002) assert that these restrictions implicate the home through the use of housing as an instrument of social exclusion for refugees and asylum-seekers, constituting a direct actualisation of an Othering framework. Simply put, the response of nation-states to globalised fear/precariousness has seen increasing circumstances which make the lives of those who are perceived as a threat equally precarious, which I have argued plays out through a critical geography of home. My participants showed that this directly impacted upon their everyday lives, from the relegation to unhomey NASS accommodation (exacerbated by enforced inactivity) and in cases when support was withdrawn leaving women wholly dependent on the 'ethical sensibilities of others' (Darling, 2009). This created greater instability and uncertainty born from decreasing levels of control over their location and the disruption to their support networks, resulting in precarious existences. In the next section I draw out the material and performative registers of home that were of importance to participants' narratives and unpack how these were experienced as porous and (in)secure, furthering the production of precarity.

### 9.3 Precarious geopolitics: Porous and (in)secure home

A further implication of the political centrality of home is the expansion beyond traditional geographical parameters, infiltrating other domains. Valdez (2010: 18) argues that US "immigration enforcement has invaded realms of transportation, work, and home that were not within its reach in the past" and these spatial transformations have "resulted in a palimpsest-like surface, in which built environments differentially target and constrict subjects, transmitting contrasting messages of access versus exclusion, freedom versus imprisonment, and security versus fear and vulnerability". Valdez notes a move to 'police the domestic realm', something my participants corroborated. This included house-raids, (multiple) periods of immigrant detention and restrictions to everyday mobilities within public space fuelling everyday insecurity. This, Valdez argues, "transforms subjective and inter-subjective understanding and expectations, creating a space that is hostile to

immigrants and a conversation that is incapable of overcoming visions of immigration crises, threat, and racialized illegality” (18-19).

When exploring the construction and management of precariousness and precarity the negotiations with boundaries become critically apparent. As the discussion of the homeland accords, key responses to generalised precariousness are attempts to establish boundaries which grapple for certainty when confronted with uncertainty. Staeheli (2011: 394) notes that physical border controls “are part of a larger dynamic of exclusion and ‘othering’ that is integral to nation-states and the ways that citizenship is often imagined and reinforced through discourses of fear”. While Staeheli speaks of controls at state borders and associated asylum measures, respondents have emphasised geopolitical strategies which are utilised to patrol, manipulate and mediate other more mundane and everyday borders such as those of the home. While boundaries are constructed between groups of people to delineate between what is Ours and what is Other, these endeavours are flawed as boundaries are not fixed but porous. Extending Butler’s ontological conceptualisations, Ettliger (2007) scales in from the macro to the omnipresent but irregular micro-spaces of everyday life. For Ettliger this constitutes the ‘untidy geographies of precarity’ which are born from the inherently unpredictable nature of social interaction, marred further by the spatial and temporal diversity of everyday experience. The consequence of these broad and disparate contexts for my participants were equally incongruent world views which result in an unpredictability, born from the collision of an individual’s and different agents’ multiple logics, but also oppositional consciousnesses which afforded acts of reworking and resistance on these social trajectories (Ettliger, 2007: 325; Katz, 2004).

In light of this everyday precarity Ettliger argues that certainty is feigned by developing strategies that afford conviction in the midst of uncertainty and which circumvent and deny the vulnerability and unpredictability which precipitate discomfort and fear. Ettliger discusses US citizens’ endeavours to ensure certainty following 9/11 such as flying national flags outside domestic dwellings. Ironically however, these attempts are achieved only through the active, reflexive denial of precarity and the adoption of essentialist logic which strengthens a biopolitical regulation of populations. I would also argue that the political and material registers of home remain equally strategic given their role in delineating between certain groups and acting as markers of difference. While Ettliger’s (2007) insights are concerned therefore with the micro-spaces of everyday life in which precariousness is born and played out universally, her observations facilitate a more focussed attention on the precarity experienced by those portrayed as Other such as my participants. She

observes that despite the reflexive endeavours to feign certainty, our everyday geographies remain messy and untidy crucially because, despite our best intentions, boundaries are not in reality fixed, but *porous*. Indeed she asserts that “[t]he paradox of socially constructed certainty in the context of precarity is conceptually a matter of unpacking the discursive, the material, and their interrelation, and analytically recognizing how framing and overflowing both prevail in different ways”. In this context ‘framing’ refers to the discursive endeavours to assert clear boundaries between discrete social groups and ‘overflowing’ the blurring of boundaries (Callon, 1998).

The centrality of boundaries was equally important to my participants’ everyday geographies of home which, in the main, were characterised by experiences of (in)security and porosity. While Ettlenger’s observations speak of Western nation-states’ responses, respondents’ encounters with home were significant in the proliferation of precarity more broadly as many struggled to regulate the boundaries of home. Ettlenger observes that the porous nature of space interferes with Western nation-state endeavours to regulate the framing and overflowing of spatial boundaries, but respondents’ narratives suggested that the irregularity of boundaries were also strategically employed by the state to exercise control over their intimate geographies. At the root of this (in)security was home as porous and permeable, rather than private and contained. Participants were acutely aware of what they described as the state’s omnipresent and unpredictable capacity to infringe the physical boundaries, infiltrating their imaginations, routinised everyday practices, relationship networks, cultural ideals and values - factors that Butcher (2010: 24-25) identifies as constitutive of a critical geography of home. While geographers concur that home is spatially and temporally porous (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Massey, 1995; Stavrides, 2006) resulting in messy and untidy everyday geographies, participants’ experiences were unique because their capacity to control this framing and overflowing was eroded by their status as Others, leaving them open to the state’s regulation and strategic exploitation of this porosity. This was rooted in demonstrations of power and control and implicated with immigration status and gendered identities. Negotiations with these homespaces remained even more complex as this porosity was experienced differentially; in some cases the potential infiltration of the state manifested in a simultaneous sense of containment and unsettling unboundedness and indeterminacy. While electronic tagging for Bella precipitated experiences of incarceration within the home, the threat of unpredictable house-raids for other participants equally disrupted a sense of security and containment.

This discussion speaks also to Agamben’s (2005) state of exception which he argues is created through a juridical void in which the law is suspended. This creates a lack of distinction between

public and private space as the anomie “comes to coincide suddenly with the space of the city” (48). As Coleman (2007b: 189) observes, this means that the state of exception cannot be a “cloistered zone of lawlessness set apart from a still functioning or signifying state of law” indeed, the anomie is “always and already pervasive in the form of an everyday field of juridical tensions”. While inaccurate to suggest the home only constituted an essentialised juridical void within Agamben’s framework, some participants experienced home as the site of ‘juridical tension’ in some cases through indistinction. As well as the real and imagined threat of house-raids and being redetained, participants emphasised less tangible factors such as lack of ownership of space, the disruption to gendered roles, with the material geographies of home evoking embodied geographies of detention. The state’s interventions were equally revealed through the performativity of everyday life within and beyond the physical boundaries of the home. While also resonating with Agamben’s (1998) conceptualisation of bare life, particularly those rendered destitute and homeless by the state, experiences of (in)security and porosity revealed a more complex interchange and blurring of boundaries which suggested a less absolute interpretation. This demanded a reworking of spatial binaries (i.e. inside/outside), imbuing the home with the productive potential in some instances to contest hegemonic demonstrations of power, for example, through the preparation of traditional food. Conceptually then, porosity is useful for construing how these homespaces were liable to ‘overflowing’, causing a merging of public and private space.

Crucially, participants’ negotiations with home were gendered and revealed the intimate, everyday reality of exclusion as well as acts of resilience (Coleman, 2007; Mountz, 2011; Mountz, 2013). Brickell (2012a; 2012b) has underscored the mutually dependent constitution of geopolitics and home. The porosity described by some participants was proliferated in part through first hand or anecdotal accounts of geopolitical interventions by the UKBA disrupting the multiscale negotiations with home if not directly then indirectly. NASS accommodation in particular, served as an extension of the detention estate both through the performativity of everyday life and the embodied experience within the physical dwelling. Not only were insecurity, vulnerability and unhomeliness products of these interventions, these outcomes were perceived as strategic attempts by the state to control women through the home. These interventions, enacted within and in relation to the home, were described as infantilising, demonstrated through restrictions to living with partners which interfered with the construction of gendered identities of wife and mother. Disruptions to the gendered life course and separation from children also materialised as essential, gendered features of everyday life.

Pratt (2005) acknowledges feminists' age-old concern with women's depoliticisation through their consignment to the private sphere, while being concurrently less able to regulate the distinction between the private and public. This observation further explicates why participants' experienced state intervention as patriarchal. The differential nature of participants' narratives as women also emerged from the predominantly gendered nature of the reasons for flight, experiences of detention as infantilising and negotiations with a gender-neutral asylum system. Aside from the regulations and interventions which shaped everyday life, this was also engendered through a pervasive identity politics which through detention and uncertain immigration status stigmatised participants, undermining social integration, belonging and self-worth. However, some participants also demonstrated agency in (re)working alternative identities through which they staked a claim to and protection from the UK. An example of this was Ella's appeal to her positionality as a human to secure access to entitlements. This speaks to Pratt's (2005) interpretations of legal abandonment which, she notes, is complex and gendered resulting in and dependent on the recursive intersection of public and private geographies.

Interrogating encounters with home therefore reveals the complex interchange and blurring of boundaries which occurred between public and private space, disrupting conventional, gendered representations of home as a discrete, private realm. This demonstrates that home is central not just to the construction of a (bio)political rhetoric but the site on which demonstration of power may be enacted, reinforced and in some cases contested. In the next section I explore why this discussion strengthens an argument for a discourse of precarity.

#### 9.4 Differential inclusion?

Feminist critiques of Agamben which note his reinforcement of recursive spatial binaries (Mountz, 2013, Pratt, 2005) have been reiterated by scholars concerned with sovereign control in more localised spaces and places, and how these are experienced. Andrijasevic (2009a: 396) asserts that despite attempts by nation-states to portray their immediate borders as impassable, in reality they are "discontinuous and porous spaces that simultaneously extend beyond and within the 'traditional' site of the border" alerting us that "the proliferation of borders and processes of rebordering blur the boundary between externality and internality (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2008), and transform the borders into zones of innovation in the technologies of government (Rumford, 2006)". Andrijasevic (2009a) is concerned therefore with the blurring of boundaries in relation to borders, labour and citizenship, particularly regarding what constitutes the 'inside' and 'outside'. Through an engagement with sex trafficking, asylum and same sex marriage, she argues that

evolving migrant subjectivities are better understood by revising the borders of the political, indeed she observes that migrants are themselves “contesting and redefining the borders of citizenship through claims to mobility, residency and employment (Sassen, 2006: 296 cited in Andrijasevic, 2009a). To this end, Andrijasevic seeks to abandon an “interpretative framework based on the exclusion in favour of a model of *differential inclusion*, which brings to the fore the stratification and proliferation of subject positions” (391, my emphasis). Andrijasevic argues that the traditional paradigm of exclusion is no longer adequate as it neglects the nuanced experiences of those migrating and overlooks that the boundaries which migrants’ encounter are less tangible and in flux. This means that maintaining adequate control over these multiple and diverse territories of virtual, indeterminate and technological character is implemented through equally diverse means and locations, from biopolitical technologies, detention practices and the delocalisation of border controls in off-shore locations (Mountz et al., 2012; Mountz, 2011).

Andrijasevic’s observations are pertinent to my respondents’ experiences of how space was experienced as differential zones of inclusion/exclusion and public/private. On release from detention most participants did not undergo a linear transition from exclusion to inclusion; indeed detention was not experienced as distinct and bounded but continually implicated in their imagined, embodied and material geographies beyond release. The legacies of detention were therefore caught up in broader processes of immigration control, in particular how these were experienced and reinforced within their everyday geographies of home. This impacted upon their sense of belonging and ‘feeling at home’, the extent to which they felt (in)secure in their homes and local communities, and shaped multiple and gendered subjectivities as wives, mothers, criminals or (non)humans. As discussed above this intersected with the state’s real and imagined capacity to disrupt routinised quotidian practices of home and invade everyday spaces and redetain them. Speaking of state-led exclusionary tactics, Coutin (2010: 201) observes that even beyond detention these strategies “situate migrants ambiguously as outside of national territory even when, physically, they are within”. Reflecting particularly on undocumented migrants she suggests that their illegal status becomes mapped onto the material landscape creating what Raustiala (2009: 5 cited in Coutin, 2010) refers to as ‘intraterritoriality’ in which migrants are continually confined within the host country. Coutin’s insights are interesting as they echo my respondents’ experiences of life beyond detention whilst also corroborating Andrijasevic’s notion of differential zones of inclusion.

While the gendered nature of participants' experiences was significant, other axes of difference came into sharp relief through negotiations with home, embroiled with the processes and legacies of detention. Similarities aside, women also had very different experiences depending on the circumstances which brought them to the UK, social support, health needs or most importantly immigration status. While precarity was largely a consequence of factors arising from uncertain immigration status, there was some resonance with 'traditional' interpretations of precarity. This is because citizenship is embroiled with the labour market as a common precondition/outcome of social citizenship is the right to work. Working illegally and worklessness both caused precarity, either because of potentially exploitative work conditions or because of poverty and dependency. Respondents articulated the multiple 'highs and lows' of their asylum narratives arising in the main from (un)successful asylum claims, resulting in fluctuating encounters with citizenship. These encounters were defined by on-going negotiations of inclusion and exclusion that demanded a reworking of legal statuses and subjectivities. Laura for example was destitute, disabled and had exhausted her rights to appeal, while Mya had been granted refugee status and was looking for work. While Laura's experience of state intervention was in part being confined to the home of another owing to her destitution and health problems, Mya was differentially insecure on account of her change in status and the discovery of new inclusion/exclusion criteria with their own spatialities (Phillips, 2006). This included eviction from NASS accommodation, entry into the welfare system and employment market all of which remained unfamiliar and which Mya felt unequipped to deal with. This on-going interchange corroborates Andrijasevic's notion of 'differential inclusion', and not just at conventional geographical borders.

There are key connections between the centrality of borders and the experience and production of precarity. As part of an online blog and in response to a talk by Judith Butler, Andrijasevic (2009b) elucidates that the experiences of migrants might be best understood as precarious as it facilitates a transition away from the dualism of inclusion/exclusion and allows for evolving boundaries (i.e. to space and entitlements). This allows for a differentiation between individual experiences and demands a critical inquiry of subject positions, sovereignty and citizenship. Indeed, my participants' critical encounters occurring on the conceptual borders of home might be explained as the reframing of contemporary borders to be policed, managed and contested, corroborating Andrijasevic's suggestion that state sovereignty is undergoing a transformation which can be traced through the disruption to spatial interactions. This offers a theoretical framework for respondents' lived experience of domestic space and the strategic employment of porosity and (in)security to augment state control, transforming the gendered space of home into a site of control and

surveillance. Crucially then, a discourse of precarity extends feminist enquiries as it affords an expansion of the field to better and differentially embrace multifarious migrant subjectivities, disrupting conventional and ultimately patriarchal interpretations of citizenship, identity and experiences of space.

The discussion here speaks to the extensive feminist geography scholarship over the past decade or so which has deconstructed the limiting binaries on which traditional work/home dualisms were once based, in particular work on geopolitics to which home has remained central (Staehele et al. 2004; Hyndman 2004; Brickell, 2012a). It has been argued that these spheres are simultaneously gendered, interdependent, geographical and historical whilst also equally political. Blunt and Dowling (2006: 27) assert that home is not “not separated from public, political worlds but is constituted through them: the domestic is created through the extra-domestic and vice versa”. This corroborates what this thesis has emphasised; that home operates and is co-constituted at different scales, from the macro framing within a political homeland discourse to the micro, intimate level for example of the body (Brickell, 2012a). Home is therefore a site of geopolitical contestation. By unpacking participants’ experiences, this chapter has suggested that in the name of ‘homeland security’ the home, in its broadest of interpretations, was for many participants disrupted. This was to the extent that these spaces were seen to have a transformational potential, actuated through the geopolitical conditions implicit to being migrant women in multiple ways and on different scales. Not only has this challenged traditional interpretations of home as a ‘safe haven’, it has demonstrated that for the majority of participants, home was experienced or perceived as insecure. The accounts of the women in this study suggest therefore that homespaces do not sit comfortably within traditional binaries of public/private or inside/outside, indeed the experiences of these spaces are best understood within a discourse of precarity and therefore as requiring constant negotiation. This diverges from other research which suggests for example that US interventions legitimised from ‘homeland ideologies caused the reshaping of home’ as a place of refuge (Ahmad, 2011). It remains ironic that the UK’s endeavours to preserve the homeland are achieved through the subjection of migrants to distinctly unhomely homes and through the utilisation of invasive measures within homespaces. This undermines individual capacities to build home and engage in homemaking practices, resulting in disrupted identities, broken social networks and loss of security (Porteous and Smith, 2001). There is further irony in international development campaigns which foreground the (absence of) home to arouse visceral and emotive responses to domestic injustices occurring ‘elsewhere’ when vulnerable and marginalised groups in our immediate communities are denied these (Brickell, 2012a).

In further underscoring a discourse of precarity, and in line with feminist endeavours to engage with the experience of the everyday, the next section returns to draw out the connections between precarity and wellbeing. This suggests that a concurrent focus on wellbeing and home affords a closer interrogation of the real life impact of precarity through a focus on emotion and ontological security.

#### 9.5 Emotional and embodied geographies of precarity

A key feminist critique of Agamben is his oversight of the real-life intimacies of exclusion, with proponents like Mountz (2011) endorsing investigations which expand discursive conceptualisations of exceptionalism to gain nuanced insights into how exclusion is contrived and experienced. The deliberately expansive interpretation of wellbeing employed in this thesis has been useful for tracing the pervasively detrimental impact of precarity on emotional and embodied scales, taking particular note of the distinct processes and legacies of detention. This broader perspective was adopted to elide biomedical categories of illness which might (re)inscribe reductionist diagnoses and shroud cultural interpretations. In the first instance the erosive consequences of detention for emotional and embodied geographies of detention have been clearly identified, becoming enmeshed with the frustration and challenges of life beyond. In seeking a better spatial understanding of these negative consequences, I have suggested that the impact of precarity for participants' wellbeing can be understood in part through a framing of ontological security which is foregrounded by concepts of home. This remains vital to understanding the co-contingencies of home, precarity and wellbeing and the significance of emotions.

The mounting geographical interest in emotion has afforded new ways of accessing lived experiences of space, not least for marginalised groups like migrants (Anderson and Smith, 2001; Davidson and Bondi, 2004; Davidson et al. 2007; Pile, 2010). These 'geographies of emotional life' were born largely from humanist geography and problematised by feminist geographers in their contestation of traditional binaries of knowledge (Bondi, 2005a). As such there is growing concern with how emotions are embroiled in discourses of power and how emotions may be utilised as a currency of control (Sharp, 2009). Pain (2009: 475 & 481) argues for an emotional geopolitics of fear as "one tool to understand, reposition and respond to accounts of 'globalized fear'", and argues that emotions afford new insights that challenge assumptions about fear, the fearful and the feared (475). This stresses the shift away from conceptualising emotion as a contained and subjective entity to one that avows its intersubjective and interspatial nature. The political refocus within work on emotions is recognised by Pile (2010: 7) as the point at which feminists' undertakings of emotion

broke away from historical humanistic roots which “posit[ed] a coherent, bounded, self-aware and universal human subject” instead “illuminating the incoherences, permeabilities, opaquenesses and specificities of human subjectivity”. The opportunity that an emotional standpoint affords has crucial resonance with a focus on precarity as it complements the nuanced and fluid subjectivities of ex-detained migrant women participants. Furthermore, it accommodates the ‘incoherences, permeabilities, opaquenesses’ of human subjectivities that Pile outlines, characteristics which are certainly heightened given my respondents’ precarious lives. The uncertainty, instability and powerlessness that participants experienced as a result of detention and life beyond was to create distinct emotional geographies defined by shame, frustration and anger. This was equally revealed through participants’ embodied geographies either through suicide attempts, self-harm or scarring which acted as ‘fault lines’ through which power was inscribed upon their bodies (Dossa, 2003). Interrogating respondents’ emotional (and embodied) geographies therefore reveals the true impact of precarity, whilst a discourse of precarity itself equally promises to further the potential offered by an emotional geographies standpoint. This suggests a symbiotic relationship that reveals the pervasive implications for health and wellbeing.

One way of unpacking this co-contingent relationship is through the concept of ontological security, to which home is centrally implicated. At the core of ontological security, Giddens (1991) asserts, is a sense of confidence in the continuity of self-identity, and in the constancy and reliability of social and material environments, persons and things. Not only is this deeply geographical, Giddens underscores the emotional dimension embroiled with feelings of ‘being-in-the-world’, emotional stability and trust. Importantly, Giddens identifies home as the site on which key conditions for ontological security are achieved. Unlike Goffman (1959) who perceives “the private realm, as a place of preparation for the front stage performance, Giddens sees the private realm as a place where people's basic security systems can be restored” (Dupuis and Thorns, 1998: 27). Hiscock et al (2001) also note that unlike the outside world, home is free from surveillance, is where meaningful identities may be constructed and where day-to-day routines of human existence may be performed. While clearly problematic in its normative portrayal of home which, as my participants attest are not representative of home for all people, it remains useful in conceptualising the impact of disrupted homes to wellbeing and the potential that stable homes might afford. Having interrogated at length the instability, porosity and insecurity of home for many respondents and their struggles to regulate this, the connections between home and precarity and the consequences for wellbeing may be framed as a consequence of disrupted ontological security.

Whilst certainly avoiding the 'shoehorning' of participants' perspectives into a Western biomedical approach, psychotherapeutic scholarship on containment offers further potential for unpacking the nexus of precarity, wellbeing and home. Scholars in psychotherapeutic fields have reiterated the importance of home to psychological development (Papadopoulos, 1997a; 2002). Bowlby's (1988a; 1998b) attachment theory is underpinned by the notion of the 'secure base' or 'container' within which meaningful attachments are formed and maintained. Others have directly and indirectly avowed home as the site on which certain prototypes of physical and psychological development are forged and where a core sense of self is developed (Bion, 1961; Stern, 1985). Houzel (1996: 905) highlights the concept of the psychic or 'family envelope' which denotes the constitution of identity and contains members, resulting in a shared sense of belonging. This is useful in deconstructing the concept of home, and emphasises the particularity of family in developing a sense of belonging, connectedness and coherence which are central not only to early development but on-going mental health and wellbeing.

This discussion implies therefore that the loss of containment can evoke insecurity which remains at the heart of precarity; indeed Papadopoulos (2002) suggests that for refugees the disruption to home is to unsettle one's very psychological foundations resulting in an existential precariousness. Not unlike those adopted by critical geographers, his interpretation of home is multidimensional; not just a physical dwelling or location but "a sense of home as a psychological, deeply felt foundation of well-being" that "connects inner and outer worlds, where habits of the heart are practised and understood by the people who form the home community" (Kohli and Mather, 2003: 206). Moreover, interactions with home present opportunities to live life with the "sense of predictability of how human beings behave, of what to expect of life, i.e. how to 'read life'" (Papadopoulos, 1997b: 14). This is useful not only in deconstructing the loss of past homes and the psychological instability this induces, but also construing the on-going disruption to wellbeing when negotiations with new homes remain precarious upon arrival to the UK. This highlights the multiple threats to wellbeing that participants encountered through their negotiations with home on different temporal and spatial scales. As well as reiterating the imbrication of precarity, home and wellbeing it also stresses the emotional register of home and the centrality of belonging.

Precarity and emotion are co-imbricated therefore, not least their relational nature. Butler (2009) identifies that precarity and precariousness are born from relations of power within the social and political realm. She stresses that humans remain vulnerable and predisposed to wounding because "our nervous systems connect us to the outside world with a plethora of pathways that

simultaneously function as conduits of our emotional insecurities (e.g. pain, fears, anxieties and grief)” (Woon, 2011: 287). Equally, emotions are understood as relational and remain influential in the mediation of society and space (Bondi, 2005a; Thien, 2005). Butler’s conceptions of precarity and precariousness are emotionally inflected, with a shift in emotions remaining central to how nonviolent subjectivities might be recast. This resonates with geographers’ interest in exploring how “personal emotional negotiations of nonviolence can be used as the basis for forging connections and enhancing social relations so as to facilitate wider political expressions/activisms for peace” (Woon, 2011: 287). This corroborates the empirical findings of this study which indicate that a discourse of precarity might augment an emotional standpoint through its conceptual potential to muster (nonviolent) responses, which remains inherently relational. This potential was revealed through the channelling of emotion in everyday acts of resilience, corroborating the refusal of some proponents to accept that emotions are inert and disempowering (Pain, 2009; 2010; Sharp, 2009). In the next section I propose that a discourse of precarity allows for the emotional and contested subjectivities of these individuals to emerge more clearly, putting forth a more nuanced representation of their ‘intimate social and spatial worlds’ (Parr, 2000).

#### 9.6 Responding to precarity: Everyday resilience

A further criticism of Agamben is his oversight of the “microforms of resistance that occur within and across different states, as forms of power, and politics, not fully reducible to the decisions of a sovereign” (Darling, 2009: 660). Katz (2004) has found inadequate the unproblematised overuse of ‘resistance’ and offered a more nuanced framework of resilience, reworking and resistance which relies upon different degrees of critical consciousness. Resilience has received many different readings but is often perceived as a “positive adaptation in the context of significant risk or adversity” (Ong et al., 2009: 1777). MacKinnon and Derickson (2013: 253) highlight theoretical and political complexities and observe that not only is the application of an essentially ecological concept to social relations too conservative, it remains politically imbalanced because resilience is externally defined by state agencies. They note that post 9/11, a rhetoric of resilience has infused public policy fields, resulting in increasing securitisation based on modes of biosecurity which in the UK has played out through broader, and pre-emptive strategies of resilience against potential threat (Lentzos and Rose, 2009 cited in MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013). This is arguably a product of a domopolitical agenda, not least because it relies upon the naturalisation of a homeland crisis. This has precipitated greater government emphasis on community resilience explicated through the ‘Big Society’ agenda which encourages individuals and communities to “harness local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency” (Cabinet Office, 2011: 4). There is some irony then

that participants were subjected to increasingly stringent immigration policy policies which saw their rights diminished, whilst remaining equally embroiled (particularly through charitable involvement) with another political agenda which endorsed self-sufficiency through informal means. Indeed as MacKinnon and Derickson (2013: 263) assert, “the promotion of resilience among low-income communities” appears “particularly dangerous, insofar as it normalizes the uneven effects of neoliberal governance and invigorates the trope of individual responsibility with a renewed ‘community’ twist”. These authors endorse instead the concept of resourcefulness which has potential, amongst others, to enhance community self-determination.

Conventional representations of precarity have contended that a crucial characteristic is its potential to unify those in similar predicaments and mobilise resistance that when harnessed has the potential to effect change (Waite, 2009). This thesis has explored the various ways that participants responded to the factors and circumstances which bred precarity, which when framed within Katz’s conceptualisations constituted acts of resilience and reworking in the main, and acts of resistance in the minority. These were relational, facilitated through informal and institutional support. This range of responses challenged gendered representations of women migrants as submissive and defenceless but suggested a more nuanced range of responses to precarity than Waite suggests. This finding echoes research which documents the varied degrees of agency demonstrated by migrants (Bachay and Cingel, 1999; Goodkind and Deacon, 2004; McMichael and Manderson, 2004; Lenette et al., 2012). Despite the range of responses, there were almost as many instances of these attempts being thwarted and undermined. These experiences speak once again to the concept of differential inclusion and the negotiations that participants underwent when trying to establish a sense of belonging to the UK. This destabilises conventions about migrant women being always and unproblematically contained within a homogenous group of excluded Others defined wholly by their separation from society.

While the potential embedded within emotion as a mobilising force has been demonstrated in practice by some geographers examining overt political resistance pursued at a range of spatial scales (i.e. community organisations and acts of individual activism) there also remains potential for emotions to be channelled within everyday contexts (Woon, 2011). The ‘everyday’ has remained of central importance to a wide range of feminist enquiries within a multitude of spatial explorations. It is broadly understood as a key access point to lived experience, facilitating keener engagements with everyday lives and their materiality whilst uncovering multiple, situated knowledges. This potential remains equally sonorous when considering the agency and resilience of migrant women.

Traditional interpretations of resilience have been critiqued for failing to avow both its intersubjective nature and the fact it remains a process which is undertaken throughout the everyday in intercession with the social environment. Indeed, Lenette et al (2012: 4) assert that “everyday life-worlds are not just ‘stadiums’ in which we might observe resilience in action, but that ‘everydayness’ is itself an achievement and a potential aspect of resilience”. The established resilient verses non-resilient dichotomy is rendered redundant when a constructionist perspective is adopted that underscores the crucial dialogue that occurs between the individual and their environment.

The everyday interactions that an individual has with their environment (read places) may shed light on diversity while simultaneously affording opportunities to enhance resilience (and therefore wellbeing) while also negotiating obstacles (Ungar, 2004). In essence, ‘everydayness’ – or the act of everyday survival is in and of itself an act of resilience, something that Allen (2008) refers to as a ‘politics of getting by’. Expanding this, Harker (2012: 17) asserts that explicitly geographical political strategies facilitate “a reduction in exposure to heightened precarity” and which are “often unremarkable and unremarked upon because they are ‘ordinary’ (i.e. part of the practice of everyday life), and ‘quiet’ (i.e. emerging from disparate and non-unified sources)”. In her investigation of Palestinian families and their practices of resistance in the Occupied Territories, Harker observes that not only does this provide an explicit focus on these everyday practices it also disrupted the very framing of these families and their attachments to the spaces in which they were oppressed. This was achieved for example through the performance of ‘ordinary’ activities despite the extra-ordinary conditions and through mobilities within geographical areas declared ‘off limits’.

My participants were shown to utilise their social contacts to respond to the everyday challenges born from their precarious lives, including poverty and destitution, social isolation and inactivity. This included accessing informal connections with other migrants or through charities to remain resourceful and canny in maximising on these. In some cases these constituted resilience or as Katz (2004) suggests were better framed as efforts to rework the inequalities that they encountered. This echoes other work which highlights the processual nature of resilience through the seemingly mundane and quotidian activities and routines of everyday life which ultimately challenges the conventional emphasis on ‘extraordinary’ individualities (Nguyen-Gillham et al., 2008; Pulvirenti and Mason, 2011; Lenette et al., 2012).

Butler’s (2000) mythological figure of Antigone discussed at the beginning of this chapter was utilised to conceptualise those in society who are ‘socially dead non-persons’ and who are subjected

to a 'precarious life'. While this speaks to Agamben's conceptualisation of bare life, Watson (2012) observes that Butler's concept of precarious life offers "a more subtly detailed analysis of suffering subjects than does Agamben's one-dimensional figure of the *homo sacer*". This is because Agamben (1998; 2005) relies upon a negative politics of death whereas Butler takes a more progressive view that concurrently avows a politics of death (immunisation) and a politics of life (the community of shared precariousness). Unlike Agamben, the answer for Butler (2000) and Esposito (2008) is an affirmative biopolitics which has the potential to invert the immunitary self-defensive reaction to shared vulnerability. Agamben has been criticised for denying the *homo sacer* the opportunity to contest bare life, but Butler's heroine displays agency as while "[p]rohibited from action [she] nevertheless acts", and whose "act is hardly a simple assimilation to an existing norm" (Butler, 2000: 82 cited in Zylinska, 2004). For Butler, Antigone "is not of the human but speaks in its language", thus upsetting "the vocabulary of kinship that is the precondition of the human" but also enacting a possibility "for a new field of the human, [...] the one that happens when the less than human speaks as human, when gender is displaced" (*ibid*). In other words Antigone represents what Butler perceives as the possibility for those occupying precarious lives to destabilise the very structure that renders them 'less than human' and the political potential "that emerges when the limits to representation and representability are exposed" (Butler, 2000: 2).

Butler's contemplations speak to the attempt of some respondents in this study to disrupt discursive objectifications which, through their relegation to unhomey homes or rendered destitute by the state, sought to frame them as 'less than human'. This was achieved through resolute attempts to resist negative and criminalised stereotypes by reclaiming more favourable ones. Others also note examples in which asylum-seekers assume the position of bare life in order to make productive demands upon the ethical sensibilities of sovereign citizens (Edkins and Pin-Fat, 2005) or like some of my participants making claims "at the level of humanity itself, of a right to humanity, to more than simply the arbitrary decisionism which signifies a life as *homo sacer*" (Darling, 2009: 655). This also speaks to Nyers' (2003: 1072-1073) 'abject cosmopolitanism' which refers to the "emerging political practices and enduring political problematics associated with refugee and immigrant groups resisting their targeted exclusion". The 'still human' discourse in particular resonates with the notion of precarity because it indicates a negotiation of multiple subjectivities and demonstrates the contestation of hegemonic values and inscriptions which frame the abjected Other as unequivocally excluded.

In line with conventional framings of precarity which draw out the potential for resistance, a minority of my participants through their charitable involvement demonstrated ways of actively contesting the institutional and political structure which contrived their precarious lives such as through campaign work and self-help groups. This was not however straightforward as it revealed additional gendered geographies of power in which the women were located (Massey, 1994; Pessar and Mahler, 2003). In the main, however, these responses were more nuanced, constituting demonstrations of resilience and reworking through the everyday and on social trajectories. This suggests that a key advantage of a discourse of precarity is the opportunity it affords to further engagements with the everyday and uncover the particularities of the political, social and material dimensions of daily life. This accentuates the everyday as the key site on which precarity is both born and negotiated. In light of the discussion on wellbeing, this also highlights the potential for individuals to reshape their emotional landscapes, attain greater ontological security and reformulate positive gendered identities.

#### 9.7 Finding a way forward

The starting point of this research was an investigation of the distinct legacies of detention but as the research evolved it became clear that despite occupying a central role in participants' narratives, the legacies of detention were inextricable from broader processes of asylum control and the often precarious circumstances which preceded their incarceration, including reasons for flight, journeys to the UK and negotiations with the asylum system. In seeking a theoretical framework through which to unpack and frame these broader narratives, I have proposed a discourse of precarity which I have argued augments and extends Agamben's conceptualisations. I have proposed that theoretically and in practice, precarity accommodates the differential nature of participants' experiences and allows for demonstrations of agency as revealed through the everyday. In seeking a spatial interpretation I have engaged with a critical reading of home which I have suggested was integral to the proliferation of precarity on political, material and emotional scales. Crucially, this has helped uncover the gendered nature of participants' experiences and revealed the consequences for identity and belonging. By interrogating the interface between precarity and home, I have asserted that a key outcome for wellbeing was the disruption to ontological security which remains equally entangled with home on different spatial and temporal scales. By way of conclusion I wish to examine how a 'state of precarity' might provoke a productive response and help shape practical recommendations for improving the everyday lives of women such as my participants. Given its pivotal role, I would like to suggest that home may also hold some of the answers. As such I adopt a two tiered approach; the first offers a theoretical proposition that augments Butler's ontological

enquiries and the second, practical suggestions identified by participants to help reduce everyday precarity and refocus policy on human rights.

For Agamben (2000), the answer to overcoming the repressive impasse of biopolitics from which the *homo sacer* is born is what Mills (2004) terms a 'messianic' change in politics which rejects state sovereignty and therefore the divisions which contrive the exception. Proponents argue that the abandonment of asylum-seekers is undergirded by a kind of humanitarian ethics and politics which contravenes relational responsibility through a "a distancing of self from other, both literally through detention and encampment, and conceptually through an increasing dehumanisation" (Darling, 2009: 656). This has been framed by Darling (2009) as a 'politics of hospitality' predicated upon conditionality, temporariness and the provision of the literal 'bare minimum'. Darling suggests a reconceptualising of the biopolitical relations of abandonment through a 'lens of highly conditional hospitality'. This, he argues, conceptualises the precarious dynamic between asylum-seeker and state in which the "privileged position of the host will evaporate, that the guest will not only overstep the mark, and out stay his or her welcome, but also may turn the space of hospitality in to his or her own" (656). It is the avoidance of this hospitality/responsibility dynamic, Darling argues, which makes the detention centre so appealing as it affirms a sense of mastery and control over the 'home' by removing the problem out of sight and mind. When framed in this way, Agamben's solution is a certain 'unconditional hospitality' which is reliant on the host nation acknowledging its own privileged but unstable positioning. This has been criticised however as to be "absolutely hospitable is to suspend all criteria of ethical or juridical discrimination. And in such indiscriminate openness to alterity we find ourselves unable to differentiate between good and evil" (Kearney, 1999: 261 cited in Darling, 2009). Darling (2009: 662) argues instead for a new ethics of hospitality which, through everyday spaces, consists of encounters which are met with a "spirit of open questioning in mind" and through which citizens respond to "the ethical demands placed upon us by our radical relationality".

Darling's observations also speak to Butler's recognition that only when we acknowledge our own vulnerability can we circumvent the defensive approach that underpins our response to the Other and which has been equally absorbed into immigration policy. While I have suggested this is given weight and legitimacy by concepts of home, Darling's 'politics of hospitality' appears similarly concerned with the nation-as-home; the state as literal host. This particular politics however demands a reworking of tensions between utilitarian principles which emphasise for example border controls and a human rights based approach which seeks to protect those in need. By way of

progress, Zylinska (2004) endorses more meaningful engagements with the Other in order to develop political justice and responsibility, something she call an ethics of 'bodies that matter' or what Harker (2012) coins an 'ethics of precarity'. Butler (1993: 16 cited in Zylinska, 2004) sees productive potential in the challenge that the 'excluded and abjected realm' may make on the very origins of an ethical response. This is because the kind of legislative responses through which the UK government deals with asylum "can only be formulated in response to the other, an other whose being precedes the political and makes a demand on it" (Zylinska, 2004: 532). In other words, the very assurance of what is sovereign is reliant upon the Other as it is this excluded realm which ultimately defines what it is, endowing the Other with some political influence.

Philo (2005) and Massey (2004; 2005) also endorse a shared responsibility in responding to the needs of vulnerable groups and to "map the spatial linkages between the 'hurt and the hurter' in order to contribute to the social justice agenda of critical human geography through exploring the production of precarity" (Waite, 2009: 427). This echoes geographical work on vulnerability, in which Philo (2005) uses the lenses of wounds and wounding to initiate a debate about how blame/responsibility might be ascribed in view of the construction of particular vulnerable places and people. Waite (2009: 421) suggests that an emphasis on wounding provokes a consideration of the "structural production of precarity versus the hitherto more individualised manner in which vulnerability has been conceived". She proposes that a critical geography of precarity may facilitate the attribution of blame in comparison to the subjective emphasis that enquiries of vulnerability encourage. While similarities between vulnerability and precarity exist, a key distinction is that while the former refers in the main to a condition, the latter is politically infused and has the potential to become a point of resilience and mobilisation. On this point, Waite posits that precarity speaks also of the political and institutional contexts which generate the condition.

Having unpacked what a theoretical response to precarity might look like, closing this thesis here would risk losing sight of my respondents' parting messages and their hopes and aspirations for the future. Ontological problematisations which cite the need to 'embrace shared vulnerability' in order to reduce precariousness and the production of precarity sits somewhat awkwardly and feels detached from the real-life experiences of my participants. Indeed, I strongly concur with Gregory's (2004: 318) commitment having unpacked the political landscape of Iraq and the egregious conduct of some American soldiers "not to subject the prisoners at Abu Ghraib to the further indignity of becoming the objects of Theory". In the first instance as discussed in the previous section, precarity generated a range of responses from resilience, reworking to resistance which occurred on

predominantly social trajectories. This suggests that for participants, precarity was imbued with the potential to muster a productive response through (re)claiming the rights to be included, contribute to society and create home. This potential may be augmented through greater investments in strengthening social capital and assisting migrants to develop resilience. Woon (2011, 2013: 13-14) calls this a 'precarious geopolitics' which recognises how "shared vulnerability can be used to mobilize various emotional impetuses for the formation of nonviolent coalitional exchanges towards peaceful non-violent outcomes". This underscores the productive potential of harnessing emotion as a way forward for marginalised groups.

Through the medium of the everyday, the narratives of women in this study also identified numerous ways in which they felt precarity might be practically responded to and reduced. Crucially, these narratives suggested that precarity is cumulative, spatial and experienced differentially and it is on these three points that the following recommendations are based.

Firstly, recognising the cumulative nature of precarity demands an acknowledgement of the often traumatic and difficult circumstances that force migrants to leave their homes and the long-term implications for health and wellbeing. These are an essential yet often overlooked context to life in the UK which highlight the already vulnerable and uncertain positions in which participants found themselves and which underpinned their decision-making. This included when and how they sought help and when they entered the asylum system. At present the state penalises those who do not seek support 'as soon as is reasonably practicable' but greater tolerance is needed for those like the women in this study who did not always know their rights, were traumatised or living in great fear. Most participants understood the need for immigration control but wished the end to indefinite detention and the practice of channelling individuals into a wholly inappropriate 'Detained Fast Track'. Indeed, despite the UK's declaration to detain as a last measure and to never detain survivors of torture and sexual violence, participants' experiences have exposed the disjuncture between current legislation and policy and its implementation. Whilst detention had undoubtedly detrimental consequences, respondents' experiences have shown this endured beyond release, transmuted through their emotional and embodied geographies with lasting consequence for their wellbeing. Of central import was how incarceration fuelled uncertainty, insecurity and indeterminacy which when combined with the challenges of life beyond contrived a generalised state of precarity that had deleterious and long-lasting effects. Furthermore, participants' testimonies demonstrate that better support is needed which prepares often vulnerable and institutionalised individuals for release. This

might help ease the transition from detention to the community and minimise cumulative uncertainty upon release.

In the second instance, respondents called for greater acknowledgement of their positionalities as women and a wish to be recognised as human. Far greater heed must be given within the asylum system to the uniquely gendered nature of women's everyday lives, not least because refugee women are more likely to have experienced violence<sup>48</sup>. The impact of separation from children and enduring disruptions to the gendered life course must be better acknowledged, not only in proliferating precarity but undermining belonging to the UK and wellbeing. Only when the differential nature of precarity is recognised can policies be tailored to meet the varied needs of asylum-seeker and refugee women, in particular tackling their marginalisation and isolation and ensuring that they receive adequate protection. Accordingly, (inter)national policy and legislative must recognise the unique kinds of persecution and human rights violations that women experience and which serve as a precursor to life in the UK. Participants also emphasised the need for greater recognition of women's autonomy and expertise so as to challenge preconceived, infantilising notions of women as victims, and greater recognition of their resourcefulness and valuable capacities to contribute to the economy and society.

Thirdly, participants' experiences underscored the specific contexts and spaces of precarity, in particular the home. Given the significance of home on political, material, emotional and embodied scales in contriving a particular precarious geopolitics, it remains incumbent that policy and legislation take stock of this and recognise the significance of everyday environments in which migrants are situated. The use of dispersal and the management of NASS accommodation must be revisited so as to avoid the continued relegation of individuals to remote, unwelcoming and unsafe locations and residences. More broadly, policies which leave asylum-seekers in prolonged positions of poverty and destitution must be urgently reconsidered as these can render women dependent upon unpredictable and potentially exploitative support systems in order to survive. While destitution at the end of the asylum process is a strategic policy of deterrence to incentivise individuals to leave the UK (Refugee Action, 2013), my participants showed that this was wholly ineffective and caused great suffering.

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<sup>48</sup> UN states that refugee women are more affected by violence than any other women's population in the world. [http://www.stopvaw.org/Sexual\\_Assault\\_Against\\_Refugees.html](http://www.stopvaw.org/Sexual_Assault_Against_Refugees.html).

The framing of wellbeing in this research has illustrated that biomedical interpretations of health are often inadequate for grasping the complexity of wellbeing and all its emotional, mental, social and embodied dimensions. This suggests that the needs of women like those in this study may be best met by healthcare services which adopt a more holistic interpretation of health. While therapeutic interventions can be necessary and appropriate to meeting the emotional health needs of refugees and asylum-seekers, I have suggested that this may also be enhanced by reducing everyday precarity. On a fundamental level, participants expressed strong commitments to work, engage in education and contribute to society but innumerable restrictions posed distinctly spatial disruptions to their engagement with local communities and exacerbated their social exclusion. The wellbeing of women like those in this study may be greatly enhanced through opportunities to (re)discover meaningful identities which create positive and coherent narratives of self. This promises to increase ontological security by enhancing predictability through established routines, a greater sense of belonging and crucially building a stronger sense of place. While securing positive legal status was an essential focal point for coping with everyday stressors, the reality for those granted protection was often harsher and the benefits less significant than anticipated. This was because new barriers were encountered and because precarity over protracted periods had left an indelible mark on mental and emotional health. This highlights the long-term damage that precarity (to which detention is key) may cause and suggests that migrants need support throughout every stage of the asylum process. Reducing precarity and enhancing security offers a productive strategy for counteracting the damage of precarious lives by re-establishing everyday stability and nurturing a clearer sense of the future.

Before drawing some final conclusions I would like to identify some of this research's limitations and consider avenues for future research.

#### 9.8 Research limitations and future research

England (1994: 244) reminds us that research is an on-going, intersubjective process which "involves reflecting on, and learning from past research experiences, [and] being able to re-evaluate our research critically". It remains important therefore to evaluate the limitations of research despite, indeed *because* of the fear this might uncover personal and professional inadequacies. This research project was limited because it was small scale which restricts the potential for generalisability, especially as all women were detained in only one of ten UK IRCs. However, as Yarl's Wood remains the main IRC holding women this helps strengthen the overall weight of the findings despite being a relatively small sample. Browne (2005: 51) observes however that while studies of marginalised

groups may be problematic because of issues of sensitivity and access, large-scale studies are often untenable and 'biased' studies inevitable. That said, the wealth and richness of participants' narratives itself posed challenges as representing these in their entirety was impossible given the thesis word limit. As a consequence, the voices of the charity workers interviewed have also remained less 'present' than originally anticipated, sacrificed to make room for the primary sample of ex-detained women.

The snowball sampling technique enabled access to an otherwise 'hard-to-reach' group but this was biased towards those with support from charitable organisations or a social network. These limitations are justifiable because without the sampling techniques employed, the research might not have occurred (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). However, further work is needed which investigates the experiences of those more marginalised women who lack support. Some drawbacks of snowballing were mitigated by recruiting initial contacts from five organisations in four UK cities which meant the sample was not drawn exclusively from one social network. While four different cities were represented in the study, the sample was undoubtedly London-centric which means despite consensus that dispersal is of critical importance to asylum-seekers, the true impact of this might not have been revealed through my sample (Dwyer and Brown, 2008; Campbell, 2011). Retrospectively, spreading fieldwork across different dispersal regions from the outset might have provided a broader geographical picture. Because this study has focussed on the finer scales of home, it has not revealed many significant geographical differences between the experiences of UK cities beyond. Further comparative research might help unpack these macro-scale spatial consequences for the legacies of detention.

The women in this study were predominantly African (13) in particular Ugandans (4). Only three respondents (two from Pakistan and one from Eritrea) were from countries currently defined as 'key sending nations' (Migration Observatory, 2011)<sup>49</sup>. This is likely because some respondents had been in the UK for some time and as Crawley (2011 cited in Migration Observatory, 2011: 7) notes, the nationality of asylum-seekers change with global crises. Further research might therefore usefully investigate the legacies of detention for more contemporary migrant groups.

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<sup>49</sup> These countries include Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Eritrea.

With the exception of Bella, all women had sought asylum at some point. Bella's unique experience as a Foreign National Offender suggests that more work is needed which investigates the experiences of the even smaller minority of non-asylum-seeking women migrants who are incarcerated and released to the community. How are these women's lives differentially precarious and their subjectivities affected by more explicit associations with criminality than their asylum-seeking counterparts? Because children were conspicuous in their physical absence from many participants' lives yet remained integral to the formation of gendered identity and belonging, further work which centres upon mothers separated from children within the UK might unpack further the nexus of home, detention and wellbeing.

### 9.9 Final thoughts

A discourse of precarity then affords the opportunity not only to differentiate the experiences of those living a precarious life but also challenges the conditions which give rise to it. While I agree with Waite (2009) that portraying discursive representations of migrants as a homogenous group runs the risk of occluding important differences to individual subjectivities, this is avoidable by adopting a broader view of precarity. Waite contends that "precarity is less useful as a descriptor of life in general and more illuminating as a term to explore particular groups in society that are often seen to be at the forefront of those experiencing precarious lives due to their labour conditions" (427) but I refute this. Not only can precarity usefully frame ontological investigations as laid out by Butler, the experiences of my respondents have shown that the condition of precarity is also born from other additional political and institutional contexts which are best unpacked through spatio-temporal investigations to which geographers remain expert. This includes how certain places and spaces generate precarity, for example through the disruption of boundaries between public and private space as exemplified through my respondents' negotiations with home.

Proponents have launched multiple criticisms of the UK asylum system on the basis that it remains biased on grounds of difference including gender and sexuality. A discourse of precarity may broaden debates on evolving state borders, transforming citizenship and the measures taken to police these. This supports feminist enquiries which seek the lived experiences of those caught in the system. Indeed the very nature of precarity augments interpretations of lived experiences that circumvent more perfunctory perspectives and overcomes the binaries on which traditional inclusion/exclusion paradigms are based. Whilst Waite acknowledges the mobilising potential of precarity, my participants have suggested that responses may exceed those responding to labour conditions. An opening up of lived experience and identification of everyday resilience and

reworking of the Other through a determination not to 'give up' creates the potential for these marginalised individuals to contest their subordination as a process of 'de-othering' (Grove and Zwi, 2006). A focus on the everyday narratives of migrant women has the effect of normalising their positioning in society, destabilising their traditional categorisation as Other usually reinscribed through celebrations of their 'extraordinary' demonstrations of resilience (Lenette et al., 2012).

The 'state of precarity' is therefore a promising way of framing the experiences of women beyond detention. While precariousness is, as Butler (2006; 2009) suggests, an inevitable part of life this remains differentially experienced and for the women in this study had an unacceptable impact on their everyday lives with far reaching consequences for their identity, belonging and wellbeing. This framework might offer policy makers, migrants and stake-holders alike a shared language through which to articulate the lived consequences of government policy whilst equally accommodating the valuable contributions that migrants may make to society. This research however only constitutes a starting point with further work needed to consider how precarity might be measured and utilised so that it becomes a useful and practicable tool for making sense of and responding to the experiences of vulnerable people seeking support.

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### Appendix 1: Participant summaries

#### Jennifer

Jennifer is 36 year old woman from Somalia who came to the UK in 2008. She endured torture as a result of the conflict in Somalia but was able to flee with the help of an agent yet was forced to leave her three children behind. On arrival to the UK Jennifer sought asylum but was taken straight to Yarl's Wood and placed on the 'Detained Fast Track'. During her detention Jennifer's mental health deteriorated but she was released unexpectedly after nearly five months for reasons that still remain unclear, and granted NASS accommodation. After three weeks Jennifer's asylum case was rejected and she was made homeless. Jennifer spoke no English, was traumatised and lacked any support network in the UK. She turned to the women she had met in detention and they helped her gain contact with a women's charity in London. They supported Jennifer to seek legal representation and one of the volunteers showed her to a squat where Jennifer began to live.

Not only did the squat provide shelter, Jennifer found a community consisting primarily of British and Irish people which became her new family. After they were evicted in 2009, Jennifer went on to live with one of the women she met and continued to live there with her. Unusually, Jennifer receives no support from the state and is supported wholly by the woman she lives with and her British fiancé who lives elsewhere. She has and continues to receive specialist therapeutic support and attends the women's centre regularly. In 2009, Jennifer went to sign on and was detained for a second time, this time for six months. At the time of fieldwork Jennifer was still waiting a Home Office decision and bureaucratic delays had prevented her from marrying her British fiancé.

#### Jana

Jana is a Rwandan woman who is 45 years old. She fled from Rwanda during the genocide when her husband, a presidential guard for the opposition, was taken away for interrogation and never returned. Jana and her three children were also subjected to torture and sexual violence and after leaving her children with a friend, Jana fled to the UK hoping to later send for her children. This proved harder than Jana had anticipated and in reality marked the beginning of a long separation from her children during which they had to fend for themselves, only being reunited after 10 years. Jana was brought to the UK by a paid agent and travelled over land through Tanzania to Kenya, eventually flying from Nairobi to Heathrow. On her arrival to London in July 2002 Jana sought asylum.

In 2004, Jana's case was refused and she was detained in Yarl's Wood in 2005 for three months. The UKBA were unable to deport Jana because her nationality was disputed and she was unable to secure travel documents. Jana's health had rapidly deteriorated during her detention owing in particular to Yarl's Wood medical staff denying her medication. The day after her release from detention Jana was admitted to hospital and remained there for two months with brain inflammation. This was caused by HIV/AIDS which Jana contracted through the multiple rapes she endured and exacerbated by the lack of medical treatment during detention. Jana was eventually granted refugee status in 2010 and at the time of the interview had just won a landmark case to have her three adult children reunited with her in the UK.

Since her release from detention Jana lived in different NASS accommodation. Unusually she fought dispersal by arguing that the women's on-going support could not be replicated elsewhere in the country. Since gaining refugee status Jana had lived in a homeless hostel with her three children. This remained largely inadequate and undermined aspects of her, and the children's, wellbeing.

Jana's relationship with the women's centre remained an essential support and through which she exercised her right to engage in political activism.

### **Bella**

Bella is a Cameroonian woman who came to the UK in 1999 with her British husband and their three children. Bella began studying and was working towards a PhD at a London university but before she had successfully applied for British citizenship, Bella's husband died unexpectedly. Sometime after her husband's death and while she was waiting for the Home Office to agree her citizenship, the UKBA unexpectedly raided Bella's family home and discovered false documents. Bella was also accused of human trafficking after she agreed to meet an extended family member's young daughter at the airport and accommodate her. Bella vehemently refuted wrongdoing, and while the charges of human trafficking were eventually dropped, Bella was sent to prison and then detained for nine months. During this time Bella's children were taken into state care.

Bella was eventually released from detention with support from a charity which helped to secure her bail. She was released to NASS accommodation in London, contingent upon her compliance with a curfew and electronic tagging. This success was largely dependent upon Bella's three children who had British nationality and lived in the UK. At the time of fieldwork, Bella's legal status as a Foreign National Offender meant her stay in the UK remained uncertain and she continued to fight deportation. The process had been long and convoluted as the Home Office eventually conceded that they had lost some of Bella's initial paperwork. As a result Bella had lost her own house, given up her studies and lived with only one daughter in NASS accommodation.

### **Khanara**

Khanara is a 20 year old Mongolian woman who came to the UK at the age of 15 with her mother and stepfather. She left a stable and comfortable life in Mongolia to live with her family whilst her stepfather completed his studies in the UK. Upon arrival, Khanara's stepfather became increasingly violent and abusive, and tried to sell Khanara as a slave to further his business interests. When he was eventually deported for other criminal activities Khanara and her mother were too afraid to return to Mongolia and instead sought asylum. When their claims were rejected, the two women were detained in Yarl's Wood for four and a half months. During this time Khanara's health deteriorated and her mobility left permanently impaired. Khanara was visited by volunteers from a charity who support detainees and on her release Khanara maintained contact with them.

It is not entirely clear on what grounds Khanara and her mother were released from detention, but both were given Section 4 support and housed in a large NASS property in London. After their release from detention Khanara's mother remarried and had another child. Khanara also married her boyfriend who was from another European country whom she had met before being detained. Due to the restrictions of her asylum status Khanara continued to live separately from her husband, spending five hours a day travelling the significant distance to and from her husband's home, but returning every evening to sleep at the NASS accommodation. At the time of fieldwork, Khanara was an asylum-seeker awaiting a Home Office decision.

### **Janet**

Janet is a 43 year old woman from Nigeria. At sixteen Janet married a widow 20+ years her senior who had five children from his first marriage. When he died she was left destitute with ten children. As Janet was unable to pay for the expensive funeral she sought help from a friend of her husband who helped her borrow a substantial amount of money. As time went by Janet was forced to borrow more and more money to pay the rent and when the lenders began demanding repayments she had no way of paying. Rather than agree to her daughter being taken by the gang to 'work' for them

Janet offered herself, agreeing to pay off the debt. Janet left her children with a friend and went with the gang.

For the first six months Janet was moved by the gang between different West African cities. She was kept in different hotels and was raped by various men. Eventually she was trafficked to London and on arrival taken to a house where she was kept for two months and then sold to another group of men. She was taken at night by these captors and forced to work in nightclubs, salons and market stalls. During this time she was forced to sleep with her captors and as time went by she was also prostituted to other men. It was four years before Janet was able to escape. Janet travelled to Cardiff after meeting a man who offered her work in a warehouse. Once again Janet was forced to exchange sex in return for food and shelter. Janet worked as a cleaner in the warehouse for a couple of years until she was discovered during a raid by immigration working illegally and on false papers. Janet was sent to prison for three months before being sent to Yarl's Wood where she remained for 22 months.

Janet's release from detention was primarily due to the Home Office's inability to secure travel documents from the Nigerian embassy. With support from a charity, Janet was granted bail and since her release has been accommodated in London on Section 4 support within NASS accommodation. At the time of fieldwork Janet was an asylum-seeker awaiting a Home Office decision.

### **Tulisa**

Tulisa is a 34 year old woman from Cameroon who came to the UK in 2004 at the age of 26. Tulisa was married to an abusive man who subjected her to several years of domestic abuse and who killed a man she hoped to leave her husband for. She was trafficked to the UK and on arrival in London was forced into prostitution in a brothel. When Tulisa managed to escape she made her way to Leicester where she was taken in by a woman but once again was forced to exchange sex for shelter. Eventually Tulisa began working illegally, using false papers and living independently in shared accommodation. For a number of years she worked in a care home and underwent training and was promoted to a senior position. In 2010 she was discovered by the UKBA when they raided her workplace and Tulisa was sentenced to six months in prison, serving three. During her time in prison Tulisa claimed for asylum.

When her sentence was complete Tulisa was moved to Yarl's Wood and was released after a week and a half. Tulisa was housed initially in a NASS hotel/hostel but very quickly her asylum claim was refused as were all her subsequent appeals. Her Section 4 support was withdrawn and Tulisa was evicted from the NASS accommodation and made destitute. At the time of fieldwork Tulisa had spent three years living illegally hoping to eventually make a fresh claim. As a refused asylum-seeker Tulisa was entirely dependent on charitable support, the church and the goodwill of friends and acquaintances. As a result she travelled frequently to access available resources.

### **Ella**

Ella is a 42 year old Ugandan woman who came to the UK after experiencing torture and persecution for political involvement in Uganda. Fearing for her life, she left her two sons behind and was trafficked to the UK. On arrival in 2001 Ella was held captive in a London house and raped by two men before escaping. After seeking help in a church Ella met a Ugandan woman, who took her in and supported Ella while she built a life for herself. Ella began by engaging in domestic work before buying false papers which enabled her to secure more established work with an agency. Over the next six years Ella built up a fine CV, taking on more and more responsible positions which enabled her to live an independent and comfortable life. In 2010, nine years after her arrival, Ella was

working as a live-in carer when the UBKA tracked her down. She was arrested and jailed for five months.

After her sentence ended, Ella was detained in Yarl's Wood for four months. When she was given a deportation date Ella had no legal representation so making use of the library, she independently put in an appeal which was successful in slowing down the process. On her release, Ella was granted Section 4 support and dispersed to NASS accommodation in Stoke on Trent. At the time of her interview Ella was awaiting a Home Office decision and had unusually managed to access some local facilities, including enrolling at the adult college. Ella had a large support network of friends and charities that she had established and maintained over time, and used this innovatively to cope with the challenges of everyday life.

### **Amelia**

Amelia is a 32 year old woman from Uganda. She was forced to flee a comfortable and successful life in Uganda after she was ostracised for being gay and detained by the police. She escaped with the help of friends and came to the UK on a visiting visa to stay with her sister. When the visa expired Amelia stayed on staying with another friend in the north of England. After two years Amelia was mistakenly accused of shoplifting and when the police were called her 'illegal' status was discovered. She was held in a police cell for four days before being transferred to Yarl's Wood where she was detained for a month and a half. Amelia was released once she had sought legal representation and submitted her first asylum claim.

On her release from detention, Amelia was given Section 95 support and dispersed to NASS accommodation, moving three times before becoming housed more permanently in another northern city. Unusually, Amelia's experience of detention was a positive one as during her incarceration she met her partner, another Ugandan woman. After release the two women were dispersed to different parts of the country. At the time of the interview Amelia's partner had been detained for a second time which was a source of great anxiety. Amelia remained heavily involved with the local Catholic Church which served as her main support while she awaited a decision on her asylum claim. At the time of fieldwork Amelia had successfully won the right for a Judicial Review based on an error of law but had been waiting seven months for a court date. This extended period of uncertainty had taken its toll on Amelia's health and she had been hospitalised with stomach ulcers.

### **Laura**

Laura is a 60 year old, divorced woman from Malawi who came to the UK in 2004. Laura had been a successful business woman in Malawi and was also heavily involved in politics, particularly around women's rights. When the oppositional government came into power Laura found herself persecuted and her business prospects sabotaged. Laura came on a visiting visa to stay with her two daughters in a northern UK city and once the visa expired she stayed on, working illegally as a cleaner and caring for her grandchildren. One day the UKBA raided her home and arrested Laura and her two daughters who were also living illegally in the UK. Laura's daughters were imprisoned and Laura's grandchildren taken into care. Just before Laura was due to attend her own court hearing her health deteriorated and she was hospitalised. Laura had renal failure, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis amongst other health problems. Laura was dispersed to another northern city where she received medical treatment but after her asylum claim was refused, the UKBA raided her home and detained her. Laura spent five months in Yarl's Wood but was eventually released and given temporary admission when her health deteriorated further.

While released, Laura was not provided with any state support and became destitute, relying wholly on a friend who accommodated her. Eighteen months had lapsed since her temporary admission

had passed and since Laura had last heard from her solicitor or the UKBA. As a result of her complex health needs and destitution, Laura struggled to leave the house and maintain contact with her one daughter who was hospitalised for mental health problems. Laura's other daughter had severed contact with Laura. At the time of fieldwork, Laura was destitute and waited for the UKBA to deport her.

### **Mya**

Mya is 26 years old and from Uganda. She came to the UK in 2009 on a working visa after her employer in Uganda sent her on a work trip. Mya was staying with her brother and working in London but as the time for her to return home approached, Mya lost her passport. Mya applied for a new one but it did not arrive in time and as a result she missed her flight and her visa expired. One month after the visa expired, Mya's brother's home was raided by the UKBA in search of another migrant. Mya was detained and held in Yarl's Wood for five months.

While in Yarl's Wood unexpected circumstances occurred in Uganda which changed Mya's situation significantly and which meant she was no longer able to safely return. These were details that Mya did not wish to share during her interview. Mya submitted a new claim to the Home Office with new evidence and she was quickly released and soon after granted refugee status. This was facilitated by Mya's existing family in the UK. Since being granted refugee status, Mya continued to live with her brother and had been looking for work for some time.

### **Pru**

In 1995 at the age of 25 Pru was living in a rural village in her home country of Burundi with her husband and four children. She was from a family of Hutus and during the on-going civil war her family became the target of violence. Pru was violently assaulted and she and her four children were forced to witness their husband and father being burned alive. Pru met a man who trafficked her to the UK, leaving her four children behind. On arrival to the UK Pru was incarcerated in a London flat and held as a sex slave for three and a half years. One day the men holding her left a door unlocked and she escaped.

In the absence of support, Pru slept rough in parks, on benches and buses before forming an attachment to a bus stop. She was eventually befriended by a Ugandan woman who took her into her home. Over the next 13 years Pru pieced together a life for herself, building a support network and working as a cleaner. As Pru became more independent she moved out her friend's home and began renting a room in a shared flat. Then in 2010 the UKBA raided her home in search of another undocumented migrant and detained her in Yarl's Wood.

During the two months that she was detained, Pru's mental state deteriorated significantly. She was eventually released after it was acknowledged that Pru had been tortured in Burundi. Pru was released without state support and became homeless again, sleeping rough. Over some months her mental state deteriorated and Pru developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Eventually the local authority stepped in and gave her a room in a shared house in London for people with mental health problems. At the time of fieldwork and after 17 years Pru was still an asylum seeker and she had been unable to regain contact with her four children.

### **Haben**

Haben is a 19 year old woman from Eritrea. She comes from a Pentecostal Christian family and, as a result of persecution in Eritrea, was forced to flee with her mother and sister. Haben left Eritrea in 2000 and travelled across the Sahara through Sudan to Libya, stopping for three years in Sudan on the way. She lost her mother and sister to starvation and illness on the journey from Sudan to Libya and made the final boat trip from Tripoli to Italy alone. The final part of her journey was made with a

group of other migrants whom she did not know across France and in 2009 was smuggled via train from Calais to Dover. She was discovered by the UKBA in Calais and as she was only 16 was taken to a foster home.

Although she was a minor, after ten days Haben was taken to prison where she remained for two months. She was then transferred to Yarl's Wood and spent a further eleven months in detention. During this time Haben was visited by a young Eritrean man who was the acquaintance of a mutual friend. Haben was given the wrong medication by detention staff and she suffered a violent reaction causing permanent scarring to her face and body. It is likely this, Haben's deteriorating mental state and an attempt to take her own life were the causes of her eventual release from detention.

Haben recently married her Eritrean visitor who is himself a refugee. She has an eight month year old son and is pregnant again. While her son is now a refugee, her own status remains uncertain and as a result she lives separately from her husband in another part of London. Since her release Haben has been housed in three NASS properties, the quality of which has improved somewhat since having her son. Nevertheless in a previous accommodation Haben was attacked by a mentally unwell roommate with an iron while she slept. Her current NASS accommodation is comfortable and well maintained but is located two hours away from her husband. She is supported financially by her husband and feels able to meet her basic needs.

### **Mary**

Mary came to the UK in 2001 at the age of 19 years old. While living and working as a newly qualified nurse in Uganda, Mary was abducted and held hostage by rebels, enduring a sustained period of sexual slavery. On her escape, Mary went to her local embassy to request a visiting visa and on arrival to the UK sought asylum. Because Mary had a contact in the UK with whom she was living, she was not given state support which left her destitute and dependent upon her friend. Mary lived in a rural village for seven years while she navigated the asylum system and during which she signed on at local police station. During this time Mary's health deteriorated significantly and she was eventually hospitalised and underwent major surgery. Although Mary had advised the Home Office of the scheduled surgery she was detained shortly after her discharge from hospital for failing to sign on. Mary was detained twice in Yarl's Wood, the first time for four months the second for ten days.

Soon after being detained the first time Mary was placed in solitary confinement when it was suspected that she had tuberculosis. It was eventually conceded that Mary had not contracted the disease but not before she had been confined for three months. On her release Mary's health continued to be so poor that she was eventually provided with local authority housing. At the time of fieldwork Mary had been recently granted refugee status but had also discovered that she had contracted HIV/AIDS as a result of the multiple rapes she had endured in Uganda.

### **Berdour**

Berdour is a divorced, 38 year old woman from Sudan with no children. Berdour was working as a doctor in Darfur and became involved in exposing human rights abuses to NGO workers. When the government discovered what she was doing, she was prohibited from practicing as a doctor and Berdour and her family were put under surveillance. As life became more and more restricted by the state, Berdour secured a visiting visa through a colleague with a view to joining a short term traineeship at a UK hospital. On her arrival in 2005, Berdour sought asylum and was dispersed to a northern city. Shortly afterwards she successfully applied to move to another city to seek the support of a charity. This charity supports asylum-seeking medical staff to return to work in the UK once status is granted. This request was granted, but over the next two years all of her asylum claims and appeals were refused and Berdour was made destitute.

In the absence of other options, Berdour established contact with another charity in her northern city which both housed her and provided her with a weekly income. At the time of the interview, Berdour had been supported by the charity for four years and was living in a shared house with four other women. Six months previously Berdour had been detained unexpectedly in Yarl's Wood for five days when she went to sign on. The justification for her detention was unclear and her rapid release was secured when a fresh claim was accepted by the Home Office in light of new evidence. Over her six years in the UK Berdour had built up a social network and was involved with the large Sudanese community. Having just submitted a fresh claim at the time of fieldwork, Berdour was looking to apply for state support.

### **Noreen**

Noreen is 29 year old Pakistani woman who came to the UK with her husband in 2000 at the age of 17 after they had an arranged marriage in Pakistan. Soon after arriving in London, Noreen's husband became abusive and her marriage deteriorated. Noreen's family in Pakistan threatened to kill Noreen should she return so she started living with a family friend in London, working as an unpaid domestic servant in return for shelter. In 2007, Noreen was introduced to another Pakistani man by a friend and they married. As they were both living illegally in the UK they jointly applied for asylum but this was rejected. Noreen's second marriage also broke down and when her husband became violent she left him, but not before she had been hospitalised and placed temporarily into police protection. This support was withdrawn however due to her immigration status.

Fearing her husband, Noreen left London to live with a friend in a northern city where she hoped to be safe. She sought help from a charity there who accommodated her and gave her enough money to survive on. Noreen submitted an independent asylum claim, and when signing on one day Noreen was detained unexpectedly. Noreen spent five months in Yarl's Wood during which she was sexually assaulted twice by a male member of staff. Noreen was eventually released from detention after her right to appeal was accepted but at the time of fieldwork, Noreen was still waiting for a court date. She continued to receive all her support from the charity.

### **Rupinder**

Rupinder is a 40 year old woman who came to the UK with her husband in 2010. The couple were forced to leave Pakistan as their love marriage was not approved of and their lives were threatened by their families. Both were well educated and came from professional backgrounds, leaving secure jobs behind. Initially Rupinder came on a student visa after which her husband joined her. They lived in different UK cities but when Rupinder's health deteriorated and she could no longer study, the couple jointly sought asylum. They were dispersed to the north of England but when their claims were refused, the UKBA raided their home and they were detained together in Yarl's Wood for three months. Whilst in detention, Rupinder and her husband were visited by volunteers who worked with a detainee support charity. On their release the couple's volunteer had maintained contact.

After being released, Rupinder and her husband were given Section 4 support and housed in NASS accommodation in London. Rupinder's health remained poor and her husband had become her main carer. The couple remained relatively isolated and detached from the local Pakistani community and their volunteer support worker from detention their primary source of social support. At the time of fieldwork the couple were in the process of submitting a fresh claim.

## **Appendix 2: Topic guide**

### **1. Participant's background**

- Country of origin, age
- Employment and educational qualifications
- Existing support networks in the UK
- Date of arrival in the UK
- Current immigration status and stage of application

### **2. Leaving home country**

- Key reasons for leaving home
- Circumstances surrounding flight
- Manner of flight, with whom and by what means? Was anyone left behind? What was the journey like?
- Chosen destination country?
- If UK was chosen what were the reasons?
- Experiences of arrival to the UK

### **3. Detention**

- Life in the UK before detention
- Circumstances leading to detention
- Experiences of detention
- Coping mechanisms in detention
- Circumstances of release
- Experiences of asylum system
- Short/long-term effects of detention after release

### **4. Life beyond detention**

- What is everyday life like – what is the average day like?
- What are the challenges?
- When you need help what do you do?
- Everyday coping mechanisms
- Available support networks

### **5. Home**

- Different dwellings since coming to the UK
- Significance of family and children
- The where/when/how of belonging or 'feeling at home'
- Creating home: Access to material possessions and impact of poverty?
- Subjective meanings of home
- Local/diasporic communities, social integration and feeling of safety/security?
- Feelings towards the UK and wider population
- How are homes in the UK different/same to past home(s)
- Keeping in touch with home country
- How has detention affected what home means?

### **6. Mental health and wellbeing**

- Representations of mental health and wellbeing
- Current health needs
- What makes you happy and healthy?
- Access to healthcare

- Are you able to do the things which are important to you in your life?
- Impact of detention for health and wellbeing
- Short/long-term effects of detention for health and wellbeing after release

**7. Closing the interview**

- How was it talking today?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions?
- Thank you for taking the time to talk to me.

### Appendix 3: Consent form



**Queen Mary, University of London**  
Mile End Road, London E1 4NS  
Telephone: 020 7882 8200  
Facsimile: 020 8981 6276  
Email: [faw242@imap.qmul.ac.uk](mailto:faw242@imap.qmul.ac.uk)  
Website: [www.geog.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk)

**Department of Geography**

#### **Informed Consent Form for Participants in Research Studies**

*(This form is to be completed independently by the participant after reading the Information Sheet and/or having listened to an explanation about the research.)*

**Title of Project:** Beyond detention: Women, home and mental wellbeing

**This study has been subject to Ethical Review Assessment by the QMUL Department of Geography**

#### **Participant's Statement**

I .....

agree that I have

- read the information sheet and/or the project has been explained to me orally;
- had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study;
- received satisfactory answers to all my questions or have been advised of an individual to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and my rights as a participant and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury.
- I understand that my participation will be taped recorded and I am aware of and consent to, your use of these recordings for the purposes of this research project i.e. completed thesis, conference presentations, dissemination to other statutory and non-statutory bodies.
- I understand that sections of my interviews will be transcribed and may be used in publications i.e. academic journals, broadcast media, conference presentations but that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from this quoted material.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study without penalty if I so wish and I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this study only and that it will not be used for any other purpose. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Signed:

Date:

#### **Investigator's Statement**

I, Menah Raven-Ellison confirm that I have carefully explained the purpose of the study to the participant and outlined any reasonably foreseeable risks or benefits (where applicable).

Signed:

Date:

*Menah Raven-Ellison  
School of Geography  
Queen Mary, University of London*

#### Appendix 4: Participant information for ex-detained women



**Queen Mary, University of London**

Mile End Road, London E1 4NS

Telephone: 020 7882 8200

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Email: [faw242@imap.qmul.ac.uk](mailto:faw242@imap.qmul.ac.uk)

Website: [www.geog.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk)

#### Participant information

Hello and thank you for agreeing to find out more about this research project.

I am interested in hearing the stories of women who have spent time in UK Immigration Removal Centres. I want to understand what life is like for women after release and how detention has affected and continues to affect their wellbeing. In particular I would like to learn more about what home means and how experiences of detention might have effected this.

Should you agree to participate, you will be one of approximately 30 women involved. Most women will have been recruited through the Crossroads Women's Centre in Kentish Town. Each participant will be interviewed by me for between 1-2 hours, either in one go or over two meetings at a convenient time of day or evening. Interviews will be held in a private place agreed jointly, and interviews will be informal and relaxed. With your consent, interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder.

Your contribution to this research is completely voluntary and all participants involved have the right to withdraw from the process at any time with no consequences. This also includes after an interview has started. The process will be strictly confidential and all names and places changed to protect the anonymity of those interviewed. Data collected through the research will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and retained for 5 years before being disposed of in a secure manner i.e. shredded. Participation in the research will have no bearing on your benefits or legal status. You will be offered the chance to read the interview transcripts and thesis once completed. I will also be offering all participants a 'love2shop' voucher to the value of £15 as a form of compensation for their time given to the research.

While the anonymity of those interviewed will be protected and the process kept strictly confidential, it is requested that participants do not disclose any criminal activity on the part of themselves or others that has not already been dealt with by the Courts. Participants should be aware that in the case of such a criminal disclosure, anonymity could not be guaranteed. This is important to protect you as a participant but should not discourage you from participating in the project.

I hope that this research, with your involvement, may help shed light on some women's experiences of detention in the UK and lead to a better understanding of previously detained women's needs. This is important because until now these needs have been largely overlooked. By participating in this research you will have the opportunity to have your voice heard and have a chance to share your stories of detention and your life beyond.

If you have any questions please get in touch with me either by telephone or email on the details provided below. Thank you very much for your time and interest.

*Menah Raven-Ellison  
School of Geography  
Queen Mary, University of London*

Please tick here if you would like the chance to;

read the interview transcript

read the completed thesis

*This research study is funded by the Economics and Social Research Council (ESRC) and has been approved by the Queen Mary Research Ethics Committee.*

## Participant information for charity workers



**Queen Mary, University of London**

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Website: [www.geog.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk)

### Participant information

Hello and thank you for agreeing to find out more about this research project.

I am interested in hearing the stories of women who have spent time in UK Immigration Removal Centres. I want to understand what life is like for women after release and how detention has affected and continues to affect their wellbeing. In particular I would like to learn more about what home means and how experiences of detention might have effected this. In order to understand these experiences better I am also spending time talking to those who support women during and after detention.

Should you agree to participate in this research, you will be one of approximately 30 people involved. You will be interviewed by me for between 1-2 hours, either in one go or over two meetings at a convenient time of day or evening. Interviews will be held in a private place agreed jointly, and interviews will be informal and relaxed. With your consent, interviews will be recorded on a digital recorder.

Your contribution to this research is completely voluntary and all participants involved have the right to withdraw from the process at any time with no consequences. This also includes after an interview has started. The process will be strictly confidential and all names and places changed to protect the anonymity of those interviewed. Data collected through the research will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and retained for 5 years before being disposed of in a secure manner i.e. shredded.

I hope that this research, with your involvement, may help shed light on some women's experiences of detention in the UK and lead to a better understanding of previously detained women's needs. This is important because until now these needs have been largely overlooked.

If you have any questions please get in touch with me either by telephone or email on the details provided below. Thank you very much for your time and interest.

*Menah Raven-Ellison  
School of Geography  
Queen Mary, University of London*

Please tick here if you would like the chance to;

read the interview transcript

read the completed thesis

*This research study is funded by the Economics and Social Research Council (ESRC) and has been approved by the Queen Mary Research Ethics Committee.*

## Appendix 5: Overview of UK Asylum legislation and implications for housing

Over the past two decades, the housing rights of asylum-seekers have gradually eroded through key changes to asylum policy and the implementation of increasingly stringent legislative measures (Dwyer, 2005). These changes are themselves a reflection of wider political and social pressure to execute measures which deter others from coming to the UK (Silove et al., 2000). In order to sketch out the housing landscape that the women in this study negotiated, the narrative offered here is deliberately limited to the past 20 years in order to provide a contemporary picture.

Dwyer and Brown (2008) usefully track the attrition of forced migrants' rights to housing from 1996 with the conception of the Asylum and Immigration Act (AIA). Not only did the AIA shift the responsibility of supporting asylum-seekers from national social security to local authorities (LA), it also removed the rights of asylum-seekers to permanent LA housing and to claim support as homeless persons. As the number of forced migrants arriving in the UK rose, the pressure on LAs in London and the South East of England amplified to such an extent that the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act (IAA) was effected. This Act introduced significant changes which continue to frame the everyday lives of migrants today. Supporting forced migrants shifted away from LAs and became the responsibility of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) which centralised the co-ordination and funding of accommodation and financial support of all asylum-seekers. Critically, this saw the introduction of a mandatory dispersal policy. The provision of accommodation is realized by NASS through the subcontracting to different accommodation providers including LAs and private landlords (Sales, 2002). Dwyer and Brown (2008: 205) observe that these new rules saw that "only those asylum-seekers who were both destitute and willing to be dispersed to accommodation offered on a 'no choice' basis to a location across the UK (as designated by NASS) were eligible for support. Dispersal offered some advantages (e.g. reduce the concentration of asylum-seekers in specific areas around ports of entry, spread the financial costs of supporting them across a wider area) and it also created new ones for the regional consortia charged with providing housing and support; not least finding suitable, available accommodation". This policy therefore determined the geographical distribution of asylum-seekers across the country, with significant consequences for long term settlement and integration when granted or refused refugee status (Stewart, 2012).

While the subsequent Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002) (NIAA) maintained the use of dispersal, it brought with it other legislative changes which shrank the support available to asylum-seekers. This was achieved through new guidelines under Section 55 of the NIAA which asserted that forced migrants who did not apply for asylum 'as soon as is reasonably practicable' had their support rescinded. As a result, thousands of forced migrants have been made homeless and destitute, attracting great criticism (Greater London Authority, 2004, Refugee Council, 2004, Dwyer and Brown, 2008, Dwyer, 2005, Phillips, 2006). The ensuing Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act (2004) further truncated the rights of forced migrants and additional trenchant measures force refused asylum-seekers with dependent children to accept 'voluntary repatriation' or risk their children being removed and taken into care. For refused asylum-seekers a final option for 'hard case' support (Section 4) which made vouchers and hostel accommodation available only to those who satisfied certain criteria and was conditional on entering into agreements to return 'voluntarily', even if their country of origin may not be safe (Refugee Action, 2006).

An important outcome of the Asylum and Immigration Act (2004) was new rules which indeterminately connected the asylum-seeker with their dispersal area. This meant that even after refugee status was granted, migrants were only eligible for support from the LA to which they had been dispersed, curtailing their options to move and seek accommodation in more desirable locations. This policy undermined, indeed continues to undermine, the capacity that asylum-seekers have to take control of their geographies within the UK, being forced to tolerate life in areas which might be hostile and suspicious to the presence of migrant communities.

Appendix 6: Diagram of the UK asylum system

