# "I survive on people": (Mis)recognising the value of social learning for mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales

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# ABSTRACT

My research sits within the sociology of refugee education literature. There is a small body of literature on specific gender and refugee education in England (Morrice 2007; Klenk 2017). There is, however, no published research exploring the experiences of women seeking sanctuary in Wales. Refugee education literature in Wales follows a reductive pattern for women and motherhood, with distinct experiences focused on childcare and caring responsibilities. My research seeks to take a step towards filling the gaps in research in Wales on refugee women and mothers and social learning. I seek to explore mothers' experiences, taking a whole-person approach. Therefore, I approached my project as research with mothers, not on mothering. The scope of my work includes all their intersecting identities, not just motherhood.

My research is epistemologically influenced by Critical Race and Feminism scholarship, particularly the concept of Intersectionality. Methodologically, my research is a qualitative study. I used dialogical and creative methods to explore the learning experiences of mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales. I generated data with 26 participants from four areas of Wales through 33 interviews, drawings, and remote photo elicitation. The data focuses on my participants' particular subjective experiences and perceptions.

I took a multi-modal, collaborative and iterative approach to my methods. I present my analysis in this thesis informed by representative, narrative and thematic approaches. My findings suggest that while my participants experienced marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion in education, social learning enabled

them to survive, thrive, and live.   For my participants, learning was not just a process of gaining knowledge or building capital but a social process that creates value through community belonging and personal identity. My collaborative approach with my participants means I have shared and disseminated early findings in refugee support communities with policy teams and Higher Education Institutions. My work, therefore, is part of a live, emerging shift in research, service provision, and policy development.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

to watch and support the achievements of my new (perhaps not so new anymore) friends.  Those in and around the Voices Network deserve a special mention. You are my inspiration.

I need to acknowledge the support of my PhD friends, too. I would not have got this far without the members of Procrastinators Anon. I owe a debt of gratitude to the friends who supported my need to process verbally, particularly those who acted as my sounding board for race and intersectional scholarship. My PGR tribe mean the world to me.  I especially thank Monica, Rania, Willow, Leah, Andrea, Becs, and Julie. I wouldn't have made it this far and would not be the researcher I am without you all.

I am also thankful to the academics, researchers, and friends who have helped along the way, knowingly or not. My supervisors, of course, have helped me reach the PhD finish line. Some individuals understood my experiences as a PhD mother and reminded me, when needed, that I am "a bad-ass mother who don't take no crap off nobody"[1] . My thanks also go to the world of Black academia, which I found through Black Twitter, for being a resource for strength. I have been lucky to have made supportive connections with ECRs and PGRs in person and virtually. Towards the end of this journey, I discovered I have friends (non-academic ones) who care enough to read drafts. Thank you all.

Finally, I must express my love and gratitude to my family. My children have played, sung, chatted, and painted their nails in refugee communities with me. They

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[1] This is a quotation from the 1993 film 'Cool Runnings'

also snuggled beside me while I typed away on my laptop. They've all spent more hours with me like that rather than playing, reading, or having fun with me. My young children's patience, understanding, and empathy are a lesson to me. I hope they know they are my anchor and guiding light in everything I do. I love you all, BBB. My husband deserves thanks for his support and patience as my partner, particularly for enduring my rants that I need a wife! My husband, sisters and Mum do not understand what is involved in a PhD, mainly not a social science PhD. So, their interest and attempts to learn mean a lot.  It is important to me to mention my late father here. When I struggled, I recalled your reaction to my GCSE results, Dad. I then imagined your reaction to my PhD graduation from wherever you are. That would make me laugh, making the struggle seem more manageable.

There are more people I could thank. I have not forgotten you all, but this thesis is long enough as it is. So, I will finish here with a thank you to everyone who has supported me and helped make this research possible.

# 1   INTRODUCTION

## 1.1  MY CONTEXT

In this chapter, I introduce myself, my PhD journey, my PhD project, and this thesis. I present the personal, academic, and national contexts, followed by a theoretical framework for my research approach. I then reflect on my positionality as a researcher. I finish the chapter with an overview of the shape and structure of this thesis, leading into Chapter 2 on the context of UK immigration and asylum policy.

My research aimed to explore the specific perceptions and experiences of education and learning for mothers seeking Sanctuary in Wales. My study aims to answer the following questions:

**Research Questions**

1. What role does learning play during transitional experiences for mothers living as asylum seekers and refugees in Wales? (Chapter 5)
2. How do mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales experience and perceive the impacts of barriers to learning? (Chapter 6)
3. Does learning play a supportive role for mothers seeking a place of sanctuary in Wales? (Chapter 7)

From the moment I started developing my research proposal until now, I have often been asked why I am doing a PhD and why I have chosen to focus on both learning/education and mothers seeking sanctuary. I have also been asked why I focus on Wales. My answers to these questions are not purely academic. I wonder whether any researchers' motivations are just academic, as have Feminist

researchers before me (Hill Collins 1989; Brown Mose and Masi de Casanova Erynn 2019; Jenkins 2020), but this introduction is about my reasons and motivations. However, to introduce my PhD and thesis, I must introduce myself and my journey to doctoral research at Cardiff University.

## 1.2  MY JOURNEY

### 1.2.1  EDUCATION

I do not see myself as a 'typical' PhD student. I start my introduction of myself with that line deliberately, as it is something I have felt impacted by throughout my life in formal education. I am not typical in my School at Cardiff University. There are enduring, temporal, and relative reasons to say that I am not a typical doctoral student. The key enduring reason is that I am both Black-mixed-race (racialised) and British (I will return to the second characteristic shortly). The temporal and relative reasons are that I am 'middle-aged', a woman, and a mother. I should be clear that my womanhood is temporal in the context of a PhD, not my identity. My racial heritage and being a woman is why I am doing a PhD as a middle-aged mum and not in my 20s.

My PhD Journey started with finding ways to articulate my experiences through academic Race and Feminist scholarship. I am the daughter of a migrant from an African Commonwealth nation. I have, therefore, always lived with the negative social, psychological, and emotional impacts of constructions of race and racism as a Black-mixed-race person. My white British mother was a teacher and had seen the extent to which Black children were assumed to have lesser ability than their white peers unless they were noticeably ahead. So, she taught me to read

before I started school. I look back on my life and can see how my father was never able to secure employment that matched his level of education (postgraduate) and experience. When a close family friend from my father's hometown died, and the Home Office would not allow his family into the country for the funeral, I was still a child. I will never forget the distrust and cruelty based purely on nationality. That is the background that led me to my doctoral studies.

As a racialised girl, woman, and mother, I developed my academic interest in education from experiences with different life stages. I was a child in classrooms and schools with a predominantly female workforce, as the schooling sector was then and is now. I never had a teacher at school who had Black heritage, and I experienced varying levels of overt and covert racism throughout my school years. Sometimes, the racism was from staff and sometimes from students.[2] Yet, none of those experiences would have been evident from my grades or participation in school life. The same was true of the exclusion I often felt as an undergraduate – it was not apparent from a superficial look at my marks or social/human interactions.

My undergraduate degree was in history, and I was the only non-white student in my entire course in a department where the academic staff were almost all white men. I was the only one of my friends who needed to work nearly full-time hours throughout our undergraduate years. Academia was, therefore, not a place

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[2] I only felt comfortable raising concerns about racism at school once, when a classmate declared that people in Africa should be grateful to the white British for civilising them. I was told that I was the unreasonable one for finding that attitude racist. I was expected to apologise for upsetting my classmate by telling them that their view was racist. I refused. I did not know how to raise my discomfort of what I could now describe as everyday microaggressions. These included derisory remarks and unwelcome attention over my hair, for example.

where I could envisage someone like me working. I have a few friends and extended family members who have completed PhDs. A couple of them work in academia. Every single one of them is white and works in a 'hard' science discipline. My social network, therefore, did not indicate (to me) that a PhD was an option.

My love of learning never waned, however. Four years after graduating with a history degree, I added a British Computer Society Graduate Diploma to my qualifications. I had gained Level 6 qualifications in two very different disciplines. My boomerang relationship with Higher Education continued when I returned to full-time education a few years later. I studied for my MA at a non-Russell Group university, rejecting an offer from a more 'elite' institution so that I could work and support myself. I loved that year. It was wonderful to be in an institution with diverse staff and students. I was finally in a classroom with numerous people with Black heritages and identities. I heard Black male peers planning to apply for self-funded PhDs and admired them. However, I did not think I could financially afford to take that path – and I did not know where to start `looking for opportunities. I was seeking work I enjoyed but that also paid my bills.

A few years later, I lived in Cardiff, now married and a mother. I also identified as disabled due to a chronic health condition. I wanted to find a new career compatible with my family life and my health. I did not want just a job, showing the privileged thinking my education to date had developed in me. I started teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and English as a Foreign Language/For Specific Purposes (EFL/ESP). I also worked as a supply cover Supervisor and Learning Support Assistant in primary and secondary schools. These jobs were all work that had developed from past voluntary experiences and ongoing

interests. I built on those experiences by taking remote/distance learning courses and qualifications in Teaching ESOL/EFL and Teaching and Classroom Assistance. I studied for those certificates while pregnant and on maternity leave with my first child. I could do these education jobs around the children's and my health needs. Yet, after a few years, I returned to university again.

I enrolled on a teacher training course to build on my teaching work. In 2015, I became a student on Cardiff University's in-service PGCE in post-compulsory education (PGCE – PCET) course. I hoped to expand my teaching and classroom work into Further Education. In that PGCE course, I finally found a tutor who did not shrug or offer platitudes when I talked about career options and doctoral study. I found a tutor who looked at me and saw me. I will never be able to explain how much that meant to me. During a personal tutorial, I light-heartedly mentioned my husband's joking remarks about PhDs to my tutor. I received an unexpectedly positive response. My tutor took me from her office, walked me through university corridors, and into the offices of a professional services team I did not know existed. She asked them to help me find the relevant information and explain the processes for doctoral applications to me. She changed my life – as did the professional services team.

The professional services team explained (as my tutor had outlined) the different types of doctoral studies and funding options. They told me I could ask if academics would be interested in supervising and supporting me as a postgraduate research applicant and, hopefully, student. That information was a revelation to me. Until then, I had no idea at all that I could contact a lecturer and propose a project

entirely of my own design. I left university that day overflowing with anticipation and possibilities – and fear.

I searched the university website from home for academics, researching areas that might match my vague ideas. Shortly afterwards, I met with two academics (women) who responded to my emails. (No men replied). Through initial meetings with those two supportive women, those vague ideas became one more clearly developed idea that eventually became my (second) PhD proposal. As academic staff, the women who went on to be my supervisors could not have been more supportive and encouraging of me as a potential PhD student who was also a mother. [3] Almost twenty years after I first graduated and at my third HE institution (fourth if counting my distance learning graduate diploma), I felt support, encouragement, and that opportunities might exist for me in Higher Education.

My interest in asylum seekers and refugees was less personal to my life but was still related to personal experiences. One of my MA modules had been on asylum seekers and refugees. I had volunteered on an asylum seeker befriending scheme in London. My social network in London included people with refugee backgrounds. In Wales, I had been a Trustee for the charity Asylum Justice. Since moving to Wales, I have developed a, perhaps voyeuristic, curiosity and interest in how different it must be for sanctuary seekers in Wales compared to those in the 'migrant city' (Back and Sinha 2018) of London. Despite being a British-born citizen, I

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[3] I was a mother of three and breastfeeding my youngest who was a baby at the time. (I had my third child in the middle of my PGCE course). The women who became my supervisors initiated meetings that took place in staff offices, sometimes with my baby and a National Museum café. They chose the museum café as a child and baby friendly place to meet.

felt the loss of the Nigerian diasporic community I had known in London. I made no assumptions, but as I navigated life in Wales as a racialised person, I could not help wondering what life here was like for those most marginalised as a racialised group.

## 1.2.2  MOTHERHOOD

My experiences as a mother were also highly influential in developing my research interests. I love my role as the primary carer for my children. However, I do not love the reductive impact of motherhood, whereby my personhood was so often reduced to reproduction and caring in areas of everyday life such as visits to the dentist or doctor, but even when talking with friends and family. When I became a mother, I experienced the loss of my personal and professional identity, as is discussed in the existing literature on motherhood (Miller 2005b).  I found myself being reduced to my reproductive role almost constantly. I was no longer 'Laura' but someone's Mum. I would be called "child's name's Mum" in most interactions. I had my first child just a few months after we moved to Cardiff. The friends and acquaintances I made for a long time were all "mum friends"; we had motherhood in common first and foremost. We often had little else in common, so interactions and conversations centred on mothering.

I had once been a young, ambitious woman, a "high-flier" in the workplace (until my health curtailed that). No one had ever used the word maternal in connection with me. Yet I found people describing me as an "earth mother" or "so obviously maternal". I was seen as a mother, in terms of the caring role of motherhood, almost exclusively. My time at work was a break from 'mum talk', but the nature of my tutoring and teaching support work meant that my professional

relationships were very transient. They usually (not always) lasted for just a limited block, typically ten, of virtual lessons or a single day in a school. My ongoing relationships remained with people and in spaces where I was, first and foremost, Laura, the mother. My ability to think critically and be interested in world politics or the state of the economy seemed lost to the world. When I later learnt about gendered and reductive social reproduction theories (Bhattacharya 2017; Bhattacharyya 2018), I found the words I needed to articulate my experiences and feelings. These theories highlight the reproduction of inequality and discrimination and the socio-cultural burden of expectations placed on mothers, racialised mothers, to conform (assimilate) and ensure their children assimilate with the majority populations. I discuss these theories further in Section 1.5 and Chapters 2 and 3.

My experiences as a Black mixed-race student had a strong feeling of consistency and continuity (not in a good way). However, the same was not true about womanhood alone. My time in education as an 18-year-old single woman living on campus was very different from that of a mature student living in London, with thoughts moving towards future employment benefits, pensions, and long-term earning potential. Both experiences were very different from returning to university as a mother of three young children. I juggled my studies as an undergraduate, working 20-40 anti-social hours weekly. Most of my peers had parental financial support and did not work. However, I still enjoyed a typical student social life and joined the women's football team. As a mature student with a daytime office-based job, surrounded by students in similar positions, my experiences were different. My peers were scattered across a vast city rather than residing on campus or in small local areas. I did not socialise with my classmates frequently or join any of the

university's sports teams or student societies. Yet, this was the one year in education when I felt closest to belonging. When I returned to education as a mother, I truly believed that my past juggling act of work, life, and study had prepared me. I thought that distance learning with a newborn had prepared me. I was wrong.

I returned to education in pursuit of becoming Laura again. As mentioned above, my boomeranging relationship with education and my work in the education sector led me to a PGCE (PCET). My past experiences, however, had not prepared me for studying with severe morning sickness or the logistics of studying, working, and caring for three children, including a newborn baby. My supportive tutor helped me decide to continue and not take a break between my first and second years. One of my peers had had her first baby during the first year of our course and had returned very quickly, so I had an example of what was possible. My tutor and the course lecturers supported my bringing my baby to classes. [4] I soon found that studying in my 30s on two hours of sleep a night due to a wakeful baby was very different from student life in my late teens and 20s on limited sleep due to late-night drinking or late-night work shifts. Individual staff were supportive, but the university's institutional systems were not. Assignment deadlines did not move because my baby had spent the past fortnight confusing night and day, for example. My progression

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[4] I took my baby with me to classes for 5 months. I was supported to breastfeed in class. I was offered the option of staff finding me a private space to breastfeed, but I declined as my preference was to remain in class, a choice which was completely supported. I was able to use a room for nappy changes when required. After 5 months I was made to feel a little uncomfortable, unintentionally, by one lecturer and a classmate with comments about me snacking during class time. I needed to eat little and often as a breastfeeding mum. At that point I adjusted my arrangements to keep up with lecture materials remotely

into a Social Science Research Methods master's course and my PhD continued my experiences with motherhood and studenthood as an invisible combination.

When I started my PhD, I became Laura, a postgraduate researcher at university, but I was still a mother. Postgraduate research funders or academic and doctoral systems did not acknowledge the reality of being a student and a mother. For example, during the first few months of my PhD, I needed to undertake accreditation training for an element of my research design. The training grant from my funder would cover travel and accommodation costs to the southeast of England but would not cover the lower cost of one-off childcare for me to do the training locally. I did the course locally, thanks to help from a friend.  I love being in a space where I am Laura first and foremost. However, Higher Education was also a space where my motherhood was erased. Only through individual acts of support could I be both Laura and Mum in formal education. Those experiences fed my desire to learn more about other mothers' education experiences.

### 1.2.3  ACADEMIC AND PRACTITIONER

My ideas evolved into a focus on mothers due to that interwoven combination of personal experiences again. And again, from finding such a dearth of literature on refugee mothers and education in the UK. My sense of invisibility fed my desire to fill that gap. Additionally, my personal experiences meant that I found refugee education literature (and general asylum policy discourse) tended to be quite reductive in the discussions on women and mothers. Women's experiences were often reduced to childcare/caring responsibilities and their reproductive roles. The commentary on women's experiences in this way often reads almost as addendums to descriptions

and analyses of experiences for all adult sanctuary seekers (Bloch 2002b; Lonergan 2015; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). (I discuss this reductive issue in the literature more deeply in the following two Chapters, in Sections 2.3 ('Gendered Asylum systems) and 3.4 (Invisible Women and invisible learning). As someone who had worked hard to escape that reduction of my life and identity, I felt something was missing in the literature. As I continued reading, I learnt that the characteristics that made me something of an 'outsider' in academia might be the same characteristics that helped me challenge notions of 'hard to reach'  (I discuss this subject more in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.2, Recruiting Mothers).

## 1.3  RESEARCH CONTEXT

The contextual scope of my thesis cuts across the structure of the UK and devolution in Wales. As discussed in the next Chapter, immigration is a 'reserved' government area. The term 'reserved' means the UK Government and Parliament based in Westminster set policy (and legislation is passed) at a UK level. Education, however, is a devolved area, so the policy is set (and legislation passed) at a Wales level by the government and Senedd based in Cardiff. Health, Social Care, and Housing are also key devolved government areas. The devolved context is, therefore, important in terms of the diverging policies that I discuss in Chapter 2, Section 2.4 (Wales – Nation of Sanctuary?).  However, I also explore learning beyond formal education institutions and systems that are increasingly focused on certifications and the economic benefits of learning. Throughout this thesis, I use the term 'education' to refer to those formal systems.

I also use Wenger's (2018) social theory of learning to define social learning as a process of community participation and engagement for a shared purpose. The engagement develops or shapes the individual and the community regarding personal identity and belonging. Social learning is a process that can take place both within and outside the formalised systems and structures of education so that it may involve informal learning in a community. As Wenger argued, "learning in this sense is not a separate activity" (2018, p. 220) from other activities in a person's life. Modern social learning theories, such as Wenger's, are heavily informed by the work of Vygotsky (1978) and his social development and sociocultural theories that defined learning as a social (interaction) process, not an individualised and independent journey. Vygotsky's work added to knowledge on child development and learning, where he argued that the latter often triggers the former, but his ideas also apply to learning for adults. That application stems from the sociocultural aspect of Vygotsky's work, which defined learning as "a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organised, specifically human, psychological functions" (1978, p.90). Wenger's social learning theory is one "of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to those communities" (2018, p.220). Wenger's focus on individuals learning through participation in a community builds on Vygotsky's position that learning is a social process, not an individual one.

I use the term 'learning' as an all-encompassing term to include the concepts of both social learning (as outlined in the paragraph above) and formal education (as outlined in the previous paragraph). For me, social learning is a process by which the individual and the community develop and grow together in ways that do not have to

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be perfectly balanced. Formal education can involve social learning when, systemically and pedagogically, the focus is on the community (in the classroom and/or beyond) and not individual journeys in isolation.  These definitions are significant because border and immigration control in the UK runs through many areas of society and everyday life (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018). Their immigration rules impact devolved areas of life, such as education and create barriers to other forms of engagement in everyday community life. I will discuss the encroachment of bordering further in Chapter 2. In the next Section of this Chapter, I briefly overview the context of seeking sanctuary in Wales as a devolved nation in the UK.

## 1.4  WALES CONTEXT

Wales first started to receive asylum seekers in significant numbers at the turn of the century, with the introduction of the dispersal system in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act (Robinson 2003a). I discuss the impact of the dispersal system in Chapter 2, Sections 2.2.4 and 2.4. Devolution was introduced during the same period with the Government of Wales Act 1998. However, the separation of devolved power is not straightforward as UK immigration policy has increasingly created legislation restricting or requiring actions in devolved areas such as education and health. For example, most asylum seekers arrive in Wales through the UK asylum dispersal system and are housed in accommodation managed by a company contracted by the Home Office.

Similarly, anyone wishing to study in higher Education in Wales needs a student visa issued by the UK Home Office. There is now an NHS surcharge for most migrants and any National Insurance and taxes they pay. In Chapter 2, I will

discuss more of the encroachment of immigration policy into devolved areas and everyday life in Wales (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018). For now, I will highlight some critical structural and systemic contexts of seeking sanctuary and education in Wales.

Wales has a 'Nation of Sanctuary Plan' (Welsh Government 2019b) that includes educational strategic plans for those seeking sanctuary. Through the consultation and development of the Sanctuary Plan, ' sanctuary seeker'[5] became the preferred terminology in Wales. Implementing the Sanctuary Plan is delivered through programmes such as REACH+ and Restart that provide ESOL and access to employment support (Welsh Government 2020b; Welsh Government 2021a). The Welsh national and local governments also manage the application of the Syrian programme funding in the Convergence areas of Wales[6]. While these programmes evaluate themselves, there is no academic or independent research on the Reach and Restart programmes in Wales or related work areas.

The Welsh Government also has specific rules for post-compulsory education (where immigration laws allow). For example, asylum seekers in Wales can be granted Home Student status for Higher Education, meaning they pay the same fees as British (rather than international) students. In England, asylum seekers are

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[5] I use the term sanctuary seeker as it has developed as the preferred term within and around asylum seeker and refugee communities in Wales. I use it in the same way as it is used in Welsh Government policy. It is a term that refers to anyone who has claimed/is claiming asylum in the UK and those who arrive as a spouse or dependent to someone who has claimed asylum. A fuller definition of 'sanctuary seeker', including reference to alternative terms used in literature and policy can be found in the Appendices.

[6] The Convergence areas are those that received specific development funding from the European Union and include West Wales and The Valleys. The area across South Wales from Carmarthenshire (west) to Monmouthshire (east) is known as 'The Valleys' within Wales, covering towns that were prominent for mining and heavy industry and have become areas of socio-economic deprivation since the closure of those industries in the 1980s.

classed as international students. Practitioners, researchers, and sanctuary seekers have repeatedly raised some core educational barriers over the past 20 years. Yet these are also areas where there has been no change in Wales (or England). These are primarily costs, transport, and childcare (Bloch 2002b; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). Wales recently piloted a scheme for free transport for asylum seekers and started a free transport scheme for refugees in 2022 (following the Ukraine crisis). However, the pilot for asylum seekers has not yet turned into a longer-term policy despite repeated calls for this.

The context of seeking sanctuary in Wales is not just about governmental policy, systems and structures. Research has shown the importance of civil society, local communities, third-sector organisations, and communities at a grassroots level (Guma et al. 2019; O'Neill 2022). Of course, local communities and systems (formal or informal) are affected by policy, most obviously by regulations and funding. Civil society organisations and local communities are a vital source of support in Wales due to the impact of the dispersal system (1999 Immigration Act). Support systems were highlighted as necessary, even as the dispersal system was introduced and the four dispersal centres – Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham, and Newport - were created in Wales (Robinson 2003a). Concerns were raised about adequate civil society and support services' understanding and knowledge of asylum and asylum seekers in Wales  (Robinson 2003a).

Yet the past two decades have shown that Welsh Communities have developed and grown as important support communities (Guma et al. 2019). For education, the lines between formal institutions and community organisations have sometimes become blurred through effective collaboration. Collaborative work

includes joint ventures between the University of South Wales and the Welsh

Refugee Council for ESOL classes and community learning (Welsh Refugee Council

2019; Llewelyn 2021). A further example is the collaboration between the Ceredigion

Further Education College and the Red Cross to support Syrian Refugees

(Ceredigion County Council 2022).

Across Wales, I have found catering projects, ESOL classes, dance classes,

choirs, music groups, arts and crafts activities, and more in refugee support groups

and community spaces. These could be seen as community and informal social

learning (Morrice 2007; Thompson and Nasimi 2020) (see Chapter 3 Section 3.3).

When I planned my research, I sought a framework and approach that would

effectively explore mothers' experiences within the context of the UK immigration

systems, devolution, and the local Welsh communities. I also wanted to explore

mothers' experiences in a way that was not reductive and looked beyond their

biological reproductive roles.

## 1.5  MY FRAMEWORK- CRITICAL STANDPOINT THEORIES

I found a theoretical framework for my research when I found literature that

resonated with my experiences. I am grateful to one of the module convenors on my

MSc Social Research Methods who introduced me to Standpoint Theories (Race

and Feminist, as outlined below). I felt I had finally found the academic language to

discuss my own experiences and the perspectives and stories I had heard from other

non-white women throughout my life. In some ways, it was as though I had found a

home. From that personal resonation, I started to think about social theories and

academic literature regarding their relevance to my research. I will now outline fundamental critical approaches that influenced my work.

I describe myself and my research as pragmatic in approach, but the concept of Intersectionality is at the heart of my work. This concept developed within and from Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT has its foundations in legal scholarship, with scholars such as Derek Bell (1995) and Richard Delgado (1992). This theory provides a framework to explain African-Americans' social and legal injustices (Taylor et al. 2016). Early Critical Race Theorists highlighted the historical impact of building a capitalist society through slavery and racial segregation on systems and structures. They showed a continuing legacy perpetuating racialisation and racism through legal and political stratifications.

The development of these arguments occurred within higher educational structures and institutions. Therefore, the views and theories also relate to those structures and systems. CRT demonstrated the reconstruction of racialised oppression and marginalisation within research and higher education (Taylor et al. 2016). The systemic, structural, and institutional racism in higher education was self-evidenced when Bell left Harvard Law School and the student reaction to that. Students rejected the teaching of race by white scholars with little or no knowledge of Black experiences. Instead, students started to organise themselves to continue their learning and lobbied on the need for representation among their lecturers and in their learning materials (Crenshaw 2011). Some of those students became highly influential Critical Race Theorists themselves.

One such student was Kimberlé Crenshaw. She first defined the concept of Intersectionality. Crenshaw showed how legal activism around gender and race had involved prototypical representatives of white women and African-American men. She argued that these structures contributed to the oppression and marginalisation of African-American women. She argued that "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism"(Crenshaw 1989, p.140). Crenshaw's work also sits within a body of Black Feminist writing. Audre Lorde (1984b) had written extensively on the cross-cutting systemic issues of being Black, a woman, working class, and a lesbian. Bell hooks (2000) wrote about the marginalisation of Black women in Feminism. Hooks argued that Feminism was too often White Feminism and that calls for liberation and empowerment were too often only relevant to the lives of White Middle-Class women. Hooks entitled one of her books, "Ain't I a Woman?" (1987), putting the issues highlighted by Black Feminism at the forefront of her work, with a nod to the infamous (and debated) Sojourner Truth speech of the same name. Meanwhile, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) developed Black Feminist theories about education and definitions of motherhood (Hill Collins 1994). Crenshaw's conceptual definition of Intersectionality was very much part of CRT and Black Feminist scholarship.

CRT was and is applicable beyond the US legal system due to its emphasis on colonial structures that the UK and other European nations historically created. Furthermore, US scholarship is not the only place where social theories about racialisation and feminism developed. I concur with Paul Warmington (2012) that CRT should be grounded in the context of Black British scholarship. In the UK, Stuart Hall became a leading thinker in theories of cultural racism. Hall's work developed

knowledge and understanding of the evolving constructions of race in postcolonial Britain. His work demonstrated the development of the constructions of race and racism from a model of phenotypical differences to a more nuanced and complex model. The second half of the twentieth century saw the development of racial othering based on characteristics such as nationality, language, culture, and religion and the vague definition of ethnicity. These changes developed through the exploitation of Commonwealth labour, debates about migration, and the re-defining of Britishness and British citizenship, which I discuss in depth in Chapter 2 (Hall 2017a).

In Education scholarship in the UK, researchers challenged constructions of race, proving that attainment differences between children were not due to innate biological differences between supposed races but structural and systemic White Supremacy[7]. Peter Figueroa (1991) was a leading figure in research and activism that helped deconstruct racist assumptions about Black and migrant children's abilities in education. Through experiential data, Figueroa was able to show the racism experienced by children and adults in education. His work also contributed to the Race Relations Act in the 1960s. Heidi Mirza (1992; 1997) is a leading scholar in Black British Feminism, demonstrating the structural and systemic layers of barriers and discrimination faced by Black girls and women in education. Mirza's qualitative experiential research revealed the negative impacts of intersecting constructions of

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[7] While race scholarship includes the study of "whiteness" as a construction. My research centres those who are racialised as not white and therefore centres the concept of racialisation and not whiteness. At times, however, the discussion of racialisation inevitable requires contextual reference to the term "white" and related concepts.

race. Those systemic constructions caused perceptions and misbeliefs about Black girls' abilities and capabilities, positioning them as innately limited. Those misconceptions negatively affected Black girls and women's attainment and achievements. Having personally experienced the impacts that Mirza described and seen the misconceptions and perceptions of sanctuary-seeking women in public discourse, such analysis was an important foundation for my research.

Further influences on the development of my research were theories of racial capitalism in its relationship with feminist race theories of social reproduction. I briefly introduce these concepts and their relationship here as they influenced and relate to my approach to my researcher positionality (Section 4.2.2) and the lens I applied to social learning in my empirical chapters 5, 6, and 7. I will discuss these concepts more deeply in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1. Cedric Robinson (2000) used the term Racial Capitalism to explore the relationship between class and race and the growth of capitalist societies. Robinson was critical of Marxist scholarship's exclusion of race in defining class struggles and layers of oppression. Robinson's work followed a history of race scholarship that highlighted the exploitation of Black labour from slavery and into the modern era (Dubois 1991; Bhattacharyya 2018)**.** In the UK context, scholars such as Miles and Brown (Miles 1999; Miles and Brown 2003) discussed the exploitation of migrant labour to rebuild the UK after the Second World War. Racial capitalism is, therefore, the concept that capitalist economies and political powers were not just built through the exploitation of the working classes. They were also built through systems of pillaging of other countries' resources, the enslavement of other human beings, and the exploitation of migrant labour. These systems were justified through the creation of the concept of race and racial

superiority, leading to the term racial capitalism. The term is most relevant for this thesis in relation to post-World War Two labour and the use of migrant labour to rebuild the UK.

Feminist race scholarship includes the concept of racial capitalism, feminist scholarship, notably for my research in feminist theories of social reproduction. Feminist scholars have shown the differences in political attitudes towards migrant men and women's work in the post-World War Two decades (Kofman 2014). Such feminist scholarship has highlighted intersecting marginalisation and the racialisation of migrant women in ways that differentiate women's experiences from men's. I found the interwoven and layered theories of racial capitalism with feminist theories of social reproduction helpful in understanding the gendered nature of the UK's asylum and immigration systems. I briefly define the concept here and will explore its relevance for and use in refugee education literature in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1. There, I highlight its relationship in my work to social learning theory, particularly for migrant mothers required to ensure they conform or assimilate to a new socio-cultural context. Social reproduction is a term Pierre Bourdieu (2018a) developed to explain the perpetuation of class oppression and inequality. Feminist scholars such as Tatti Bhattacharyya (2017) have critiqued Bourdieu's class-focused concept of social reproduction, highlighting the gendered issues with societal and cultural reproduction in caring responsibilities (children, older people, disabled people, ill relatives) and the socialisation of children. Social reproduction is an area of domestic (within the home) labour often expected of women and is usually unpaid and unrecognised. Feminist scholars such as Gargi Bhattacharyya (2018) have provided an intersectional perspective to the notion of social reproduction of oppression and

inequality by combining it with the concept of racial capitalism,  demonstrating the reductive marginalisation of migrant and non-white women's paid and unpaid labour. In such work, I could see how the reduction of 'othered' women in the UK has been to biological reproduction, caring, and domestic labour. Such gendered reductivism is interwoven with culturally racist othering that has enabled discrimination and exploitation, greater than the sum of its parts. Theories and frameworks for exploring multi-layered intersectional forms of oppression and marginalisation seemed highly appropriate for helping me to explore the experiences of the dehumanising othering faced by sanctuary-seeking mothers in the UK.

## 1.6  REFLEXIVE POSITIONALITY

In this section, I use the concept of reflexive positionality to pull together my personal journey and my epistemological/academic one. I will return to reflexive positionality at more length elsewhere, particularly in Chapters 4 and 8. The epistemological valuing of subjective perspectives and experiences has influenced me. Using in-depth qualitative data to highlight the impacts of social interactions has changed academic and societal thinking on marginalised groups, such as Black women and girls (Crenshaw 1989; Mirza 1992). Critical Feminist scholarship has highlighted distinct experiences faced by women and girls in asylum and refugee debates (Freedman 2015). I discuss such research and scholarship further throughout Chapters 2 and 3. I will say that Intersectional Feminism seemed an appropriate framework for my study with marginalised mothers seeking sanctuary. Qualitative work informed by Critical Race and Feminist theories resonated powerfully with me. They gave me the tools to articulate and understand my own experiences. Through

those tools, I found confidence in my perceptions in the face of a lifetime of gaslighting/doubt over microaggressions and intangible structural marginalisation.

CRT and Black Feminist theory also helped me to build a framework from which to approach my PhD as a whole. My framework was informed and developed by the debates on insider versus outsider researcher positionality that accompanies critical qualitative inquiry (Hill Collins 1986; Nowicka and Ryan 2015; Ryan 2015). My journey and motivations for my research mean that my positionality is always at the forefront of my mind. Once again, Intersectional Feminist research provided me with the necessary academic language and tools.  My research is with mothers, and I am a mother. I am racialised, and so are sanctuary seekers. Yet I also knew that my experiences of racialisation were as a Black mixed-race mother with British citizenship as a birthright.  My experiences would differ from those of a mother seeking sanctuary in Wales. Those similarities and differences were what brought me to my topic. They continued to play an important role throughout my PhD journey – including considering whether I should be doing this research as someone without a refugee background.

In academic terms, I had learnt that consideration of my identity and social characteristics in relation to my participants was the notion of 'positionality'. My continuous, iterative consideration of my positionality is 'reflexive' (Carling et al. 2014; Islam 2020). I knew I was not an 'insider' as I am not a sanctuary seeker and never have been. Yet, I did not think I would necessarily be seen as a complete outsider in refugee communities. My visible position as an 'ethnic minority', a woman, and potentially a mother was more akin to being an 'insider'. I, therefore, have, in my words, a "mixed positionality" (with a nod to my heritage).

I am a British racialised mother. I research the subjective realities of racialised mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales. My theoretical and academic position as a researcher is that gendered racialisation is a deliberate legal and political construction based on citizenship and human worth hierarchies. I will discuss this context throughout Chapter 2. I, therefore, explore my participants' experiences within an epistemological framework that acknowledges my positionality's importance. My positionality was significant for my interactions with participants. It also affected analytical and presentational choices. I explore that significance in Chapter 4 (Methods).

## 1.7  THESIS STRUCTURE

In this section, I outline the structure and content of my thesis. The thesis comprises eight chapters, including this one, and I provide a sequential overview of the following seven chapters. In Chapter 2, I discuss the (Post-World War Two) history of UK immigration policy and legislation. That discussion provides the context for the intersectional experiences that mothers face when seeking sanctuary face in Wales. I explore the context of racialised and gendered policies,  which have deliberately and consistently created and exploited a social and legal construction of asylum seekers and refugees as 'other' and a 'burden' rather than persecuted humans (Bennett 2018). That context has led to the 'hostile environment' of the 2010s and the complete derogation of human rights responsibilities for asylum seekers with the Rwanda plan in the Nationality & Borders Bill (Webber 2019; UNHCR UK 2021). I also demonstrate that the Welsh context is one where the number of asylum seekers only became "significant" for policy in Wales after the 1999 Immigration Act and the introduction of a new (and enduring) dispersal system. I highlight dispersal's impact,

such as isolation and lack of social networks. Then, I discuss the context of Wales trying to be a 'Nation of Sanctuary' (Welsh Government 2019b) despite the UK government's "weaponization" (Webber 2019) of hostility.

In Chapter 3 (Social Theory and Refugee Education), I focus on social theories and their application in refugee education literature. I explore specific ideas and debates used within refugee education literature, focusing most closely on theories of social reproduction and social change and then highlighting their relationship to theories of social learning. I draw on international refugee education literature, but the primary scope of the chapter is on refugee education in the UK. Through that scope, I highlight the scarcity of research literature in Wales despite its specific context of devolution and policy divergence, creating a distinct national context from England. I also comment on the absence of literature on sanctuary-seeking mothers, other than in reductive paragraphs on reproductive, caring roles and domestic labour. Finally, I explore the limitations and gaps in the literature about social learning. I touch upon the potential significance of social learning and communities of practice in Wales, referring back to Chapter 2. From there, I position my research questions and the potential for my research to impact Welsh Government policy and community service provision.

Chapter 4 focuses on my research methods with a return to 'my journey' and reflexive positionality. I explore how and why I generated experiential data centring my participants' subjective and personal perspectives. I outline my qualitative, ethnographic, creative, dialogical and collaborative methods. I discuss my analytical approach with multi-modal episodic narrative and thematic analysis. I used Mueller's (2019) definition of episodic narrative as "a targeted window into the experiential

aspect of social concepts and issues; it helps us to uncover the layered reality of difficult- to-see social phenomena by way of storytelling." (2019, p.3)  Finally, I reflect on my processes for data generation and analysis. I highlight the significance of those processes for presenting my findings.

I present my analysis across three Chapters - 5 (Narratives of Transitions, Learning, and Resilience), 6 (Misrecognition, Misinformation, and Well-being), and 7 (Mothers, Learning, and Sanctuary). I wrote these three chapters to represent and centre the women I worked with. In Chapter 5, the scope of my analysis is directly linked to my first research question:

1. What role does learning play during transitional experiences for mothers living as asylum seekers and refugees in Wales?

I present four episodic narratives from Sarah, Pam, Irene, and Dansitu [8] that give individualised details of experiences and introduce key themes, informed by a framework of multi-layered social resilience (Obrist et al. 2010).

. I centre visual data and include a multi-modal presentation of data to reflect the collaborative and representational approach I took throughout the project.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I explore two key themes of misrecognition and misinformation (Chapter 6) (Fraser 2007) and seeking sanctuary through learning

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[8] All names of participants are pseudonyms. I discuss the ethics of anonymity in Chapter 4.

(Chapter 7). These two chapters present my analysis in ways that address research questions two and three:

2. How do mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales experience and perceive the impacts of barriers to learning? (Chapter 6)
3. Does learning play a supportive role for mothers seeking a place of sanctuary in Wales? (Chapter 7)

My analytical process was systematic, based on an approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis is presented in a thematic narrative multi-modal format to reflect and represent the breadth and depth of experiences and the mode of data generated with participants.

Finally, Chapter 8 highlights and discusses the most critical ways my findings answer my questions. I also discuss the significance of the gaps I identified around social learning, Wales, sanctuary, and mothers. I discuss the implications of my findings for policy, specifically devolved policy in Wales. I make recommendations for policy, service provision and areas of further research. I also discuss how my research and my positionality as a researcher already impact organisations, institutions, and the research landscape in Wales. I finish my thesis with final reflections on my research questions, journey, participants, Welsh policy, practice, and research context.

## 2   IMMIGRATION POLICY CONTEXT

## 2.1   OVERVIEW

In this chapter, I provide the political, social, and legal context in which individuals, including mothers, may seek sanctuary in Wales. I will trace the history of UK immigration and asylum policy from the end of World War Two to the end of 2022. I do this using academic research and policy documentation. I start by demonstrating the continued racialised nature of UK immigration and asylum policy. I then discuss the gendered nature of international and national (UK) systems, showing the intersectional nature of the challenges faced by women and mothers seeking sanctuary. I then move into the divergence of current Wales policy, with the Welsh Government's goal to be the world's first 'Nation of Sanctuary'. From there, I outline the existing knowledge on the educational background of sanctuary-seekers and Wales. I finish the chapter with a short concluding section that links the context discussed in this chapter and the theory-based nature of the following chapter.

## 2.2  RACIALISED UK IMMIGRATION POLICY [9]

### 2.2.1  REDEFINING BRITISHNESS

Granting refuge or sanctuary has a long history in the UK, dating back to the French Huguenots in the 16th and 17th centuries, with modern asylum and immigration policy starting with the 1905 Aliens Act.  The 1905 legislation was short and vague but aimed to prevent "undesirable immigrants" from entering the UK (UK Government, p.1). Adelman and Aron (1999) have depicted the twentieth century, globally, as one in which a world of colonisation turned to division through bordered nation-states, often focused on homogenised ideals. They argued that this contributed to the state apparatus across Europe and the rest of the Global North, driving negative perceptions of refugees just a few decades after universal promises and declarations of refugee protection.

Scholarship in the UK, from race researchers such as Cole (2017) and Solomos (2013), has argued that after the Second World War, colonial and Commonwealth migrants were seen as necessary by policymakers for work such as building and labouring to enable those seen as native to the UK to focus on more skilled labour. Feminist scholars such as Wright (1995) and Kofman (2000) have also demonstrated that migrant women were used for caring and domestic roles. Such female labour partially enabled privileged white British women to work in public positions. Some skilled women were encouraged or supported to take up/continue

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[9] See Appendix 10.2 for a list of immigration legislation

paid work outside the home, while others were pressed out of the workplace to have families. Migrant women were used for either domestic labour or care and health work, while migrant men's labour was used in areas such as construction. Even today, migrant women tend to work in caring and domestic roles that were traditionally seen as the work of 'housewives' or unmarried women and are disproportionately represented in low-paid caring roles (Wright 1995; Kofman 2000; Miles et al. 2003; Kofman 2016). Men and women from the British colonies and Commonwealth were encouraged to come to the UK as 'British subjects' to appropriate their labour in the short term (Miles 1999; Bhattacharyya 2018).

The concept of 'Racial Capitalism' (Robinson 2000) encapsulates the exploitation of racialised labour. Racial capitalism was evident in the UK during the 1940s and 1950s, with the post-war rebuilding and the creation of a nationalised healthcare system, the NHS. In the same year (1948) that the HM Empire Windrush ship arrived from the Caribbean, the post-war UK government enacted it is first legalised and racialised concept of citizenship with the Nationality Act. That legislation erased the idea of global, colonial British subjects. It introduced a nationalised, racialised hierarchy of British citizens. The Nationality Act introduced two new citizenship statuses, one for 'Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies' ('CUKCs') and the second for the Colonies/Commonwealth only. This legislation embedded legal and social stratification or marginalisation. It formalised a system of racialised 'othering' by creating a division of 'them' and 'us' into the concept of Britishness and systems of immigration control (Anderson 2013). Colonial and Commonwealth labour was considered a necessity that required careful control to ensure no surplus beyond the requirements of the British political establishment

(Miles and Brown 2003). The policy never intended that these British subjects settle in the UK in significant numbers for the long term. For just over a decade, Britain rebuilt itself using overseas labour before there was another distinct shift in policy. As scholars such as Rex (1999) and Cole (2017) have demonstrated, the developments of the construction of race as a social, socio-legal, and cultural concept helped build racialised socio-legal and cultural constructs hierarchies of citizenship.

### 2.2.2  REDEFINING CITIZENSHIP

The 1960s was one of the most significant decades in the history of UK immigration policy, with a decade of racialisation and 'othering'. While it was the decade that saw the UK's first Race Relations Act (1965), it was also the decade in which Enoch Powell made his infamous "rivers of blood" speech (1968).[10] The government passed a series of Commonwealth Acts (1962, 1965, and 1968) that increased restrictions on immigration from Britain's former colonies. Immigration had steadily risen since the late 1940s, reaching just over 200,000 annually by the 1960s  (ONS 2016). Once overseas labour was no longer required for post-war rebuilding, policymakers increasingly saw immigration as a problem – migrants' work would now be surplus to requirements. The problematising was tightly related to constructions of

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[10] Enoc Powell's speech was anti-migrant and pro-repatriation policies. It very divisive, leading to his dismissal from the shadow cabinet and immediate public protests. It was blamed for subsequent racist attacks on British South Asians. Politicians in the following decades sought to distance themselves from its sentiments. However, Suella Braverman, as Home Secretary, was likened to Enoch Powell in 2022. Further reading is available on the following news sites:
https://www.theguardian.com/news/1968/apr/22/mainsection.ianaitken
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/14/enoch-powell-rivers-blood-legacy-wolverhampton
https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/braverman-enoch-powell-invasion-migrants-b2215010.html

race and Britishness (Cole 2017) and the 'othering' of those who did not fit the new constructions of being British. Scholars such as Mirza (1992) have argued that 'race relations' were primarily focused on assimilation, with the underlying assumptions of inferiority versus superiority from colonial constructions of race remaining firmly in place. I will discuss this further in the next chapter concerning education. The 1968 Act restricted citizenship to those "who were born, adopted, registered or naturalised in the UK, or who had such a parent or grandparent" who had the right of entry to the UK such as "CUKCs holding UK passport holders" (Home Office 2017, p.18). Meeting such criteria was much easier for those from the countries that were part of what became known as the Old Commonwealth[11] nations (Canada, New Zealand and Australia) than for those from the countries that were part of the New Commonwealth (in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean). The Commonwealth Minister described the 1968 Act as "clearly discrimination on the grounds of colour" (BBC News Online 2008) because the discussions on, and the content of, the legislation were so clearly racialised. Three years later, the 1971 Immigration Act ensured that permanent migration from the 'new' Commonwealth became almost impossible by introducing the concepts of 'patriality'and 'right of abode'.[12] The 1971 Act was seen by some as proactive planning to maintain the racialised notion of Britishness in the future (Williams 2015b).

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[11] In the second part of the twentieth century, countries that gained independence after the Second World War became known as "New Commonwealth" with the other nations known as the "Old Commonwealth"

[12] The 1971 concept of patrial/partiality was the right to live in the UK, defined as the right to abode in the Act, through the British birth of a parent or grandparent. People residing in or wanting to enter the UK were defined as patrial or non-partial by the 1971 Act.
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/77/section/3/enacted
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/right-of-abode-roa/right-of-abode-roa

While successive British governments were able to enact means of controlling migration from former colonies, they were not able to assert such control over global developments in the last three decades of the twentieth century. The immediate post-war decades were not free from conflict (the Hungarian Rising, for example). However, those conflicts were not of significant interest in the UK. The UK Government focused on rebuilding and using (exploitation) and then restrictions on Commonwealth labour. Those seeking sanctuary in the UK due to conflict in their home countries were not initially considered problematic. However, by the end of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s, there was a shift in asylum policy. The expulsion of East Africans from Uganda in 1972, for example, came after the 1971 Immigration Act, so the UK Government initially denied access because those expelled were not British Citizens  (Hayes 2002; Williams 2015a). The UK government reluctantly accepted 29,000 East African Asians as political refugees (Refugee Council 2019). There was also a reluctance to help refugees from beyond the Commonwealth, such as those fleeing the Vietnam War. Yet the Vietnam War (which ended in 1975) led to a model of a resettlement programme for refugees based on a specific nationality. This model has been used and adapted in the 21$^{st}$ century with Syrians, Afghans, and Ukranians.

By the 1970s and 1980s, the years of immigration policy based on reactive rebuilding and then barricading to deal with the recent and colonial past were essentially over. The notion of a Commonwealth-wide Britishness had been completely de-constructed and racialised, and immigration numbers remained stable. The UK Government turned to a vision of the future based on relationships with geographical neighbours and the development of the European Economic

Community (Consterdine 2017). To help ensure that future, the government passed the 1981 British Nationality Act, closing most options for long-term economic migration into the UK for ethnic minorities (Hayes 2002). The category of 'CUKC' citizenship for remaining dependent territories was reclassified, and the automatic birthright to British citizenship for a child born in the UK was removed. It would now be necessary to have a parent with British citizenship for an individual born in the UK to be eligible for British citizenship, making it more difficult for families to remain or reunite permanently on British soil.[13] It also ensured that those children born in the UK to those who had arrived from the New Commonwealth and stayed since the 1960s would not automatically become citizens. There was a clear message that people from the newly independent ex-colonies were firmly considered 'outsiders' and that permission to enter the UK was not an opportunity for long-term settlement. Immigration law had constructed a racialised concept of Britishness based on a majority 'whiteness' in the 'One Nation', the UK (Dixon 1983).

In the late 1980s, there was a significant shift in the global political landscape. During the 1980s and 1990s, there were further conflicts in Asia and Africa, for example, the Rwandan Civil War of 1990-1994. The UK and other European nations sought a move towards a collective economic and political future, affecting attitudes towards outsiders. However, the period of sustained peace within Europe also

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[13] The second British Nationality Act in1981 was passed during the period of preparation for the handover of Hong Kong to China, prior to the Sino-British Joint Declaration. It has been argued that the main motivation for the legislation was to ensure the right of residency was not available to those born in Hong Kong who were ethnically Chinese (Mark 2020). Most of those 'citizens' in Hong Kong would already have been excluded by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968, but the 1981 British Nationality Act made that exclusion tighter.

ended. The violent breakdown of the European Eastern Bloc from 1989 (most significantly, the Balkan Crisis of 1991-95[14], involved serious conflict on European shores, relatively close to the UK. By the 1980s and 1990s, successive UK governments had successfully restricted options for legal routes for voluntary migration to the UK. However, developments in transportation and communication increased the possibility of travelling further from the areas of conflict (Robinson 2003b; Spencer 2011). These simultaneous global shifts contributed to changes in UK borders and a shift in focus for UK immigration legislation with new forms of racism and increasingly hostile policies.

### 2.2.3 REDEFINING RACE/WHITENESS

As the 1980s closed and the 1990s started, the UK saw a rapid increase in asylum claims through spontaneous arrivals and a new focus on protecting Britishness. Until this period, the UK government had been able to try at least to control and decide who arrived at its national borders for sanctuary as arrivals came through internationally planned programmes and negotiations with other governments (Robinson 2003b; Spencer 2011). In the 1980s and 1990s, refugees increasingly reached British shores independently from such programmes. Such cases became known as spontaneous arrivals (Bloch 2002c) who exercise their legal right to claim asylum once on UK/safe land. Additionally, numbers from outside Europe increased

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[14] War broke out in the Balkan region of Europe as the Eastern European Communist bloc broke down. Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and subsequent wars broke out in the Yugoslavian territories as different ethnic groups sought to create independent nations with conflicting aims for state borders. International armed conflict happened in what is now Bosnia and Herzegovina led by Serbian and Croatian forces.

again, except for the period immediately following the Balkan crisis. In 1987, the primary countries from where asylum seekers came to the UK were Sri Lanka, Iran, Pakistan and Uganda – Africa 30%, Asia 62% and Europe 5.6% (Robinson 2003b). In 1988, the UK processed 4,000 'spontaneous' asylum applications. Just three years later, this had leapt to 44,800. Asylum claims continued to rise throughout the 1990s, peaking in 2000 at 80,315 and again in 2002 (Home Office 2001; Commons Library 2021). Robinson  (2003b) and Spencer (2011) argued that UK governments felt they had lost too much control of their borders—this perceived loss of control concerned consecutive policymakers (Dixon 1983; Powell 2007; Cameron 2013). The UK state had consistently sought control based on the racialised notion that too many 'others' were detrimental to the social fabric of society.

Researchers have argued that these combined factors of increased asylum claimants and a sense of loss of control marked significant shifts for European governments, including the UK  (Bloch 2002c; Schuster and Solomos 2004; Bulmer and Solomos 2018). These shifts led to changes in the focus of immigration policies. The UK moved from trying to control numbers of Commonwealth immigrants to trying to control numbers of those seeking sanctuary. During the 1990s, voluntary migrants and sanctuary-seekers rose yearly from 61,000 in 1996 to 179,000 in 2005. The 1990s saw the first modern notion of a 'crisis' for Global North nations in response to people fleeing persecution and war (Malloch and Stanley 2005; Solomos 2013). On the surface, the UK government was willing to accept those needing sanctuary. In reality, public discourse and government policy became increasingly hostile, eventually leading to the formal adoption of a Home Office policy of hostility (May 2012; Travis 2013).

The Conservative governments of the 1990s set about systematically creating new, punitive immigration controls focused on deterrence, detention and deportation. Policy and legislation dismantled the notions of shared humanity and universal human rights that followed the Second World War. The post-war UK Government had been a leader in developing and delivering international instruments such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) of 1948 and the 1951 Refugee Convention (and its 1967 protocol). Those instruments were intended to enshrine universal and inalienable human rights (social, political, economic) and legally ensure asylum seekers' protection and refuge (sanctuary).

Yet, the 1993 legislation (Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act) introduced new purpose-built detention centres based on the premise that a significant proportion of those claiming asylum do not need it and are a threat to society instead. The 1993 Act started stripping asylum seekers of fundamental human rights support for UK citizens and other residents. For example, a new and restrictive eligibility test for social housing for homeless asylum seekers was introduced, denying them the socio-economic right of access to shelter under Article 25 of the UNDHR. The 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act extended the punitive and dehumanising approach further by stripping in-country asylum claimants/spontaneous asylum seekers of fundamental human rights. It refused asylum claimants of the socio-economic rights to social security benefits and any eligibility for housing. These changes also brought exclusion from educational grants, free school meals, dentistry, and eye care. Over time, legal challenges to the discriminatory treatment of asylum seekers to prevent children from suffering complete destitution led to the use of the 1948 National Assistance Act and the 1989

Children's Act to force local authority support through Article 25: Right to Adequate Living Standards and its emphasis on family (Hayes 2002; Mynott 2002; Rabben 2016). However, the UK Government had established the principle that human rights in the UK are a privilege that does not need to be respected equally for all citizens.

The UK positioned itself as a wealthy nation with a robust welfare system, making it a desirable place for outsiders from less prosperous (inferior) countries. Therefore, new arrivals claiming sanctuary must be checked and tested to determine whether they are genuinely needy or worthy. Tighter border control for asylum seekers became even more critical as freedom of movement of the EU was extended. Eastern European economic migrants were considered an issue with increasingly prominent cultural racism and racialisation developing in UK policy discourse, as evidenced by Fox, Moroşanu, and Szilassy (2012). Yet for the UK government, fellow Europeans were still preferable over those outside Europe, even those in need of sanctuary, as cultural racialisation, based on concepts such as Islamophobia, assimilation and integration, developed within the discourse of multiculturalism (Worley 2005; Craig 2008a). EU countries gradually harmonised policies. That harmonisation created lists of safe countries, fines for carriers (not traffickers) of humans, increased visa requirements for those outside the EU, and greater intelligence sharing. For example, the Dublin Convention 1990 prohibited making multiple asylum applications  (Robinson 2003b). The UK government moved towards a new form of racialised discrimination linked to legal status. It created a new hierarchy of citizenship and residency that delimited support for human rights previously deemed universal.

The accession of additional countries to the EU and the increasing numbers of sanctuary seekers spontaneously reaching British shores meant a shift in focus for UK government policy in the 1990s. While public discourse showed cultural forms of racism, as described above, government policy and discourse actively encouraged increasing hostility towards sanctuary seekers. The discourse of 'othering' moved from a focus on the desirable (construction of superior Europeans) and undesirable (non-White Commonwealth citizens) to concepts of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving', the 'genuine' and the 'bogus'. The idea developed that cultural differences, not just visible differences, were a barrier to 'others' living harmoniously with 'us', even in multicultural Britain. Just as racist immigration policies had developed alongside the creation of the first Race Relations Act in the 1960s, the 1990s saw the development of culturally racist immigration and asylum policy alongside the notion of pride in British multiculturalism (Solomos 2013).

The systemic reconstruction of race enabled a redefinition of 'whiteness' to be about more than skin colour. The notion of whiteness became increasingly linked to factors such as language and culture. Hall (2017b) defines this as cultural racism. This reconstruction of race and, thereby, racism enabled the critiques of multiculturalism. I do not have the space in this thesis to explore the complexities of multiculturalism. However, I must note that eventually, talk of a 'crisis' in multiculturalism developed (Solomos 2013). Such discourse highlighted the history of consistent racialisation of migrants, refugees, and their descendants through the preceding decades.

By the turn of the century, racism and racialisation of those from other countries had become increasing forms of cultural racism  (Schuster and Solomos

2004). Highly popular and influential tabloid newspapers such as The Sun ran articles and editorials claiming that these newcomers from Eastern Europe undermined the British sense of identity and even threatened the national way of life (Kushner 2005). The binary model of 'them' and 'us' became more complicated with concern about which of the 'others' should be allowed to live amongst 'us' (Kushner 2005). Binaries have been created within binaries. As the EU expanded, there were visibly hostile reactions in the UK to the arrival of countries such as Hungary and Romania into the club with 'us' (Fox et al. 2012). Hostility, labelled by several academics as "xeno-racism" (Cole 2017, pp.52–55) or "xeno-racist" (Malloch and Stanley 2005, p.58) immigration policy, focused on fellow Europeans. New immigration statuses were created through legislation, creating a multi-level hierarchy of residency. That hierarchy was created through social constructions of Britishness based on immigration and citizenship status (Anderson 2013; Bennett 2018). Those constructions were supported by and interwoven with reconstructions of race and whiteness, with the development of cultural racism (Hall 2017b).

## 2.2.4  REDEFINING REFUGEES

The idea that citizenship and residency in the UK are privileges was extended further in the 1990s, culminating in the 1999 Immigration Act. That legislation hardened the idea that humanity and human rights are not universal but privileges of citizenship and immigration status for those residing within British borders. The 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act was pivotal for asylum policy in the UK, arguably remaining the most significant piece of immigration legislation for the next 20 years. The policy remained one of problematising and racializing asylum seekers as burdensome outsiders. Politicians positioned asylum seekers as too different from

British people and more likely to behave fraudulently and deceitfully than in need of sanctuary from trauma (Schuster and Solomos 2004). Through the 1999 Act, the New Labour government firmly established a new rung at the bottom of the citizen and migrant hierarchy. They introduced two new systems under the slogan 'Firmer, Fairer, Faster' (Home Office 1998). Those cemented the demonisation and dehumanisation of asylum seekers.  Firstly, asylum seekers were prohibited from working. A new financial support system (£35 per week at the time – 70% of the basic rate of income support for British citizens) and housing through a new National Asylum Support Service (NASS) was introduced. Secondly, asylum claimants requiring NASS would be dispersed to a regional location to spread the 'burden' from southeast England and major English port towns/cities across the UK (Robinson 2003b).

This notion of an asylum burden was not a new idea: it can be traced back to at least the 1960s with government policy and discussions including dispersing migrants, with the idea that high numbers in any area could only be problematic (Back and Solomos 2020). The 1999 Act cemented precise controls that enabled the forced dispersal of asylum seekers – the arrivals with few or no choices or options. Only once an asylum seeker was granted Leave to Remain (a formal term for permission to reside in the UK), as a refugee, or another status giving 'protection', would they be considered any part of British society. 1999 was also a highly significant year for governing the UK; it was the year of devolution and the formation of Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish national governing assemblies. I will discuss the significance of that timing in Section 2.3 and again in Section 2.4

Successive UK governments' attitudes to asylum seekers developed within a broader European context. Marfleet (2013), like Adelman and Aron (1999), has argued that focusing on a bordered state has often been at the expense of refugees, not just in immediate policy but also in their international erasure from history. Within Europe, there was an increasing focus on reducing those national borders while building a fortress around a new community (Lenart 2012). The rise of nationalism that contributed to the conflicts in many countries, including Eastern Europe, increased the number of global refugees. Conversely, the UK and other Western European governments sought to protect themselves by seeking forms of homogenising border controls.

Legal critiques of that first Dublin Convention swiftly included derogations of humanitarian responsibilities and violations of asylum principles with the options for swift expulsions of asylum seekers (Hurwitz 1999). The Dublin II regulation was outwardly developed to harmonise European immigration policies and the sharing of responsibilities towards asylum seekers and refugees. Yet it attracted further legal concerns, with debate on whether it could be considered fortress building that was non-compliant with the European Court of European Rights (Lenart 2012). Yet, EU governments forged towards a new stage of immigration policy with the notion of a standard European Asylum system.

The fear of losing state control (Castles 2003) and the need for homogenised states became interwoven into developing a union of nation-states. The concept of citizenship across Europe was incorporated with cultural racism, influencing global North-South relations. Authors have described this new attitude to asylum and immigration in an era of increasing globalisation as 'Global Apartheid' (Richmond

and Valtonen 1994). In the UK and across the EU, white middle- and upper-class citizens (men) were firmly at the top of that hierarchy, holding and controlling positions of privilege and power.

Yet the world was changing, meaning that the need for control was taking place in an increasingly globalised and digitised world with communities able to be local and disparate, national, transnational, and international (O'Neill 2022, chap.2), changing the nature of the challenge for control. An asylum seeker's ongoing legal, social, cultural, and economical construction placed them firmly at the bottom of that hierarchy (women below men). This hierarchy has been shown to have had long-term negative impacts on refugees and their integration into new European home countries (Bartel et al. 2020). An asylum seeker was no longer someone a nation-state should willingly offer sanctuary and protection. Instead, they were 'other', whose presence was a burdensome obligation that should be tolerated only where necessary (Schuster and Solomos 2004; Nayak 2015).

The dehumanising, demonising approach to asylum policy in the UK (and much of the Global North) heightened in the 2000s. In 2005, the UK Government reduced 'Leave to Remain' for those granted refugee status from 'indefinite' to five years, at which point the individual/family would be required to prove they still cannot return to their former home. Only then may 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' be granted. The 2010s saw a return to Conservative government leadership and the delivery of policies intended to strengthen an approach that had not been harsh enough. Criticism from NGOs and the academic evidence of the systems' flaws have not been sufficient to influence politicians and policymakers (Robinson 2003b; Gray and Statham 2005; Spencer 2011; Refugee Council 2019). Instead, the Home Office

declared a policy to create a "hostile environment deliberately" (May 2012). This policy was arguably (Webber 2019) a means to weaponize hostility with a perspective of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as enemies to be defeated in a battle.

In the early 2010s, male labour was considered a 'surplus' to requirements when industries like construction were downturned. In contrast, the trend for migrant women workers was upward as demand in the caring sectors grew (Kofman 2016). The discourse on asylum seekers often demonised men and women in different ways. Men seeking asylum have increasingly been portrayed as fraudulent (and cowardly) economic migrants, while women are depicted as vulnerable but potentially culturally problematic burdens (Georgiou and Zaborowski 2017). The vulnerability of women has even become a strategic construct for both policymakers and service providers to justify increased 'othering' (policy) and gain resources in the third-sector (Mesarič and Vacchelli 2019)

The mid-2010s were a significant period for both global events and UK immigration and asylum policy responses to them. In 2011, a civil war in Syria started, leading to discourse from Global North nations about an(other) crisis for their borders and societies by the middle of the decade. The UK policies of the 2010s developed in that context. In 2012, the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, systemised the concept of a 'hostile environment' that a Labour Immigration Minister had introduced in 2007 (Goodfellow 2019; Webber 2019). The Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 developed as legislation to enact May's 2012 policies of hostility. They changed the removals and appeals system, giving the government more powers for the former and individuals fewer options for the latter. It also restricted

access to public funds, particularly impacting women fleeing domestic abuse  (Erel 2018). They also brought border control into areas of everyday life such as education, healthcare, housing and employment, with increased requirements for educators, landlords, employers and healthcare professionals to check and record immigration status. Current asylum policy is built on the 'hostile environment' that Webber  (2019) argues has been used as a systemic weapon against migrants and refugees.

The UK's immigration and asylum systems are rooted in the racialised and hierarchical worldviews that drove colonialism (Mayblin et al. 2020). In this 'hostile environment', the Brexit 'Leave' campaign leaders such as Farage and the UK Independence Party, known as UKIP,[15] could boldly exploit anti-migrant images, sentiment and discourse (Cap 2019). Brexit itself is not a direct policy of immigration and asylum. However, it demonstrates how successfully and profoundly decades of anti-migrant and refugee discourse and policy are embedded in British society. Racialised worldviews and constructions of the 'other' are in the fabric of British society from top to bottom.  Those worldviews and constructions have led to a denial of fundamental rights. They have also created a system that has brought harsh border controls into everyday life (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018). UK governments have created a legal system of 'slow violence' (Mayblin et al. 2020).

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[15] Nigel Farage is a right-wing libertarian ex-politician who led the campaign for the UK to leave Brexit, as leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) while sitting as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP). Further information is available here: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nigel-Farage

The Nationality and Borders Act 2022, dubbed the "Anti-Refugee Bill", was developed from this historical context. The immigration and asylum plans developed under one of May's successors, Priti Patel, were more explicit in their racist and ideological notions than preceding policy and legislation (Qureshi and Mort 2021). I would argue that such explicitness reflects the ongoing trajectory of immigration and asylum policy in the UK. This 2022 Act involved such hostility and dehumanisation its cruelty has brought international and national condemnation. The critical, controversial areas of the 2022 Act are Clauses 9 and 11 and the use of age assessments. Clause 9 increased the power of the UK government to strip an individual of citizenship without notification. Ethnic minority citizens are more likely to have dual citizenship or to have been born overseas. These two key criteria could allow the UK government to strip someone of British citizenship without leaving them stateless. Single citizenship would not be enough to protect someone under this clause, as the Home Office considers anyone eligible for another citizenship would not be stateless. So British citizens with only British heritage, primarily white British citizens, would enjoy protection while those with non-British heritage might not. Under Clause 11, those who arrive via "irregular" means and routes, that is, through a country the UK government considers safe and/or with no visa, will be deprived of more rights.

Clause 11 is the section of the legislation that provides the legal framework for the Migration and Economic Development Partnership, referred to as the 'Rwanda Plan'. This plan is the agreement between the British and Rwandan governments for those whose arrival is deemed irregular to be sent to Rwanda to claim asylum (with no return to the UK). This plan will have the most impact on sanctuary seekers who

are most likely to have fled from persecution, conflict, and risk to life outside Europe.

The program included an initial payment of £120 million for a facility for

approximately 100 people, plus processing and integration costs for each claimant.

In exchange, the UK government agreed to accept an "unspecified number of

vulnerable refugees" from Rwanda (Gower and Butchard 2022). Clause 11 also

restricts the rights of family reunion to 'group 2'[16] of asylum seekers, which would

disproportionately affect women and children as they made up 90% of family reunion

arrivals in the five years preceding the legislation (Refugee Council 2022)

Further clauses in the Act impact children, particularly unaccompanied

minors, by introducing new age assessment methods. The UK Government insisted

that testing saliva and other cells/samples and measuring body parts are appropriate

and scientific methods of determining a person's age. Yet experts dispute and

condemn the validity of these methods, an issue Third Sector organisations and the

Welsh Government raised (Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium 2021b;

Refugee and Migrant Children's Consortium 2021a; Hutt 2022; Refugee Council

2022). Researchers have been criticising such assessments, whether used in the UK

or elsewhere, for years as "junk science" (Noll 2016), acts of "imperialism" (Dahler

2020), and "racism" (Hopkins and Hill 2010). The Nationality and Borders Act is

then, in effect, legislation that introduces state-led and funded human trafficking,

undermining international laws and protocols and promoting racialised practices.

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[16] The Nationality and Borders Act categorises asylum seekers and refugees as either 'group 1' or 'group 2'. Those who travel through another country to reach the UK are categorised as 'group2' https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/differential-treatment-clause-11/

It is, therefore, perhaps unsurprising that Amnesty International UK (2022) openly branded the 2022 legislation "racist" and that refugee women's groups have condemned the disproportionate impact on women and children (Women For Refugee Women 2022). Furthermore, international human rights and refugee protection bodies have repeatedly condemned the legislation for undermining and breaching international law (UNHCR 2021; UNHCR UK 2021; UNHCR 2022). The condemnation involved last-minute intervention through the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) with the Home Office's first attempts to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda (Harvard Law Review 2022). Yet the Home Office has not dropped these plans.

There has been public speculation that the plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda was an act of political grandstanding. Some commentators suggested the government would use any failure of the plan to help justify dismantling the UK Human Rights Act (requiring the withdrawal from the ECHR). The attack on the Human Rights Act would come with the political discourse criticising immigration and human rights lawyers (ITV News 2022b; ITV News 2022a). Whatever the motives behind the plan, a profound and significant impact has been reported, not just for the asylum seekers facing deportation in June 2022 but for other asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and racialised people living in the UK. (I should note that I have felt the negative social, psychological, and emotional impacts myself, as a Black-mixed-race and heritage person).  It is debatable whether the motivation was to start deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda or to dismantle the human rights protecting other residents in the UK, too. Either reason would mean that asylum seekers are seen as disposable, political pawns, or both. Such attitudes reflect the legacy of

postcolonial and racist attitudes and highlight how deeply embedded they are within the UK political system. The National and Borders Act and the very recent Illegal Immigration Bill reflect a continuation of attitudes in policy-making, not a marked change (Amnesty International UK 2022; Madden 2022).

The treatment of Ukrainians fleeing Putin's 2022 attacks has further highlighted the racist and racialised aspects of UK asylum and immigration policy. The Nationality and Borders Act was pushed through Parliament in 2021 and 2022. In 2021, Afghanistan 'fell' to the Taliban, with British and American troops withdrawing. In January 2022, The UK Government promised sanctuary to 20,000 Afghans who had worked for them/the British forces and needed to flee under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). By September 2022, 6,314 people had been granted Leave to Remain in the UK under the ACRS pathway for vulnerable and at-risk people. Protection was also given to 5,982 people under the additional Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) (Home Office 2022a). Yet, simultaneously, the Government was demonising and pushing through legislation to allow the deportation of further Afghans fleeing the Taliban. Official government data also shows that most asylum seekers entering the UK via the Channel in the same period were from Afghanistan (Commons Library 2021). Political and media condemnation of channel-crossers increased, justifying the legal Immigration Bill that could finally close all routes for spontaneously claiming asylum in the UK.

In contrast, when Putin attacked Ukraine (again) in 2022, Government rhetoric was, on the surface, supportive of Ukrainians needing to flee. The Home Office quickly developed new visa options and support schemes such as "homes for

Ukrainians". There was no option for individuals to open their homes, with state support, for refugees from anywhere else. Ukrainians were depicted as 'genuine' refugees, contrasting with those crossing the Channel to seek asylum. This divisive approach contributed to descriptions of the Nationality and Borders Act, with its Rwanda Plan, as racist (Amnesty International UK 2022).

However, I see the UK Government's position on Ukraine as one of convenience (Home Office 2022b). The Home Office used Ukrainian refugees to strengthen constructions of refugees as potentially "bogus". Ukrainians, fellow Europeans, have been depicted as "genuine" refugees, with those fleeing from Africa or Asia – including Afghanistan – described as "bogus" refugees. Accusations of cruelty, racism and anti-refugee policies have been deflected with the discourse on modes of entry, using Ukrainians as examples. In that sense, Ukrainian refugees have been treated with neither genuine humanity nor privilege by the UK Government but were dehumanizingly used as political pawns and cover to drive through deeply racist and anti-refugee legislation. The new Illegal Immigration Bill would, if passed, explicitly criminalise almost all spontaneous asylum seekers (UNHCR 2023). The Home Secretary Suella Braverman's rhetoric across various areas of her role has become so divisive that even a senior Conservative Party figure has condemned the rhetoric as racist (Francis 2023).  The legislation and policies of 2021, 2022, and early 2023 came after I completed fieldwork. They are not reflected in my findings but reflect the historical development of racialised and increasingly cruel immigration and asylum policy. Therefore, they have relevance for the context in which my participants lived when I generated data with them.

## 2.3  GENDERED ASYLUM SYSTEMS[17]

In the previous sections, I have shown that the asylum system in the UK sits within a broader context of racialised immigration controls. In this section, I will focus on the gendered nature of international and UK asylum systems, which intersect with the racialised ones. Feminist scholars have shown that the international legal framework in which the modern concept of a refugee (and an asylum seeker) was constructed was gender-biased, rendering the experiences of women and girls invisible (Freedman 2015; Kofman 2016)

The 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, including its 1967 Protocol (Refugee Convention), does not specify gender or sex in its list of characteristics for which individuals might face persecution. The social groups are "race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR 1951).  Women often must claim status as a refugee on the grounds of being part of a persecuted 'social group', which is not always easy for a group that makes up half of any population. The Refugee Convention did not acknowledge sexual violence or gendered harm such as Female Genital Mutilation. Such harms disproportionately affected women and girls (Freedman 2015).  The 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) is similarly lacking (United Nations 1948). These were and are much-needed international legal instruments. They came

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[17] Due to the historic nature of some of the materials referenced in this section, I refer to sex as a biological construction defined by law (Equality Act 2010 in the UK) and gender as a social construction through which societal roles, abuses, exploitations, stereotypes, etc have been developed using the construction of sex.

when the world saw horrendous human rights violations, and many people were still forcibly displaced.

However, these instruments were imperfect; they did not recognise that women have specific issues and forms of persecution. Women were legally unable to be recognised as refugees because of gender-specific or sex-based trauma, oppression, or persecution. Violence against women and girls (VWAG) was not widely perceived as an issue by those in positions of power (men) until the 1970s and 1980s  (Byrnes 1988). The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was meant to address gaps and provide a clear position that women should be afforded equal rights as men and not be denied those rights based on their sex (United Nations 1979). Yet CEDAW also did not mention sexual and gender-based violence, such as rape, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, such as sex trafficking or sexual slavery, or battery.  It was not until 1993 that violence against women/gender-based violence in both public and private was formally internationally recognised as a global human rights issue, with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) (United Nations 1993). Researchers and policymakers did not give migrant and refugee women any specific attention until feminists started demanding that attention (Byrnes 1988; Freedman 2010b; Freedman 2015).

Feminist lawyers and scholars sought to address the gendered omissions in the UNHDR and the Refugee Convention. They have done so through legal channels and lobbying campaigns – mainly because women can be seen as a "social group"  (Reanda 1981; Byrnes 1988; Hyndman 2010). The 1980s was the UN Decade for Women, following CEDAW.  During this period, some feminist scholars

turned attention to the invisibility of women in international human rights instruments (Byrnes 1988) and the impact that has on domestic law and the status of women as asylum seekers and refugees. Feminist scholars, such as Reanda (1981), have argued that individual states have ignored issues explicitly related to female refugees as the international legal instruments allow them to do so. The absence of gender-related and sex-based human rights violations and forms of persecution from the 1951 Refugee Convention was reflected in the legislation and systems of the UK (and other nations), for example. Criticisms highlighted structural persecution and domestic oppression as reasons women may need sanctuary. Analysis of political and legal processes continued to highlight the lack of recognition of factors such as using rape as a tool of war and violent or forced marriage (Stark 1996; Turshen 2000; Freedman 2010b). Despite DEVAW finally recognising these human rights issues and domestic interpretation of 'sex' as a social group sometimes, there was still no explicit and direct legal obligation to consider sex-based or gendered persecution specific grounds for granting refugee status (Freedman 2016; Canning 2017).

The limited definitions of the 1951 Refugee Convention continue to limit the protection or sanctuary women are offered in the UK. Resettlement programmes focused on men despite most refugees in camps and settlement areas being women (Freedman 2010a; Freedman 2015). Gender biases mean that women may be more likely to be considered ineligible for refugee status through a spontaneous asylum claim (Lobo 2012; Canning 2017). This results in rejected claims or Leave to Remain granted but in a form with lesser stability and rights than refugee status. For example, Discretionary Leave to Remain (DLTR) is more likely to be awarded to

women who have experienced domestic abuse and are granted for two and a half years rather than the five years that come with refugee status. Moreover, since 2012, those with DLTR are only eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) after ten years (previously 6), meaning they must prove their claim, paying each time, at least four times before getting the security and safety of the long-term settlement. These gendered disadvantages are how and why the asylum system has inflicted structural gendered abuse through its slow violence and legally and socially constructed exclusions (Canning 2017; Mayblin et al. 2020).

Nonetheless, in recent times, there have been moves forward to recognise the gendered and sex-based issues for asylum seekers and refugees. The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act made human trafficking for prostitution an offence. The subject of rape being used as a war crime has recently gained more attention. The issues of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers and the specific issues women face for their sexual orientation have seen some (hard-won) positive outcomes in UK courts (Freedman 2016; Canning 2017). However, court action and external pressure have forced those changes into the system. They cannot be seen as a reflection of a system in which policymakers are genuinely trying to support the rights of women seeking sanctuary.

In the UK, women, including pregnant women, are held in detention centres despite reassurances (when the centres were created) that this would not happen. Mothers and children are separated, and sometimes children are detained (with or without a parent). Stories emerging from the detention centre at Yarl's Wood are of traumatised women too often experiencing further gender-based harm and sexual violence  (Canning 2017). Theories of social reproduction using concepts of the

perpetuation of structural discrimination and the lack of value placed on domestic labour demonstrate that societal and systemic treatment of mothers has direct and negative impacts on their children (Bhattacharya 2017; Bhattacharyya 2018). The 'slow violence' (Mayblin et al. 2020) of everyday bordering is now central to the asylum system. Everyday bordering is defined and extensively discussed in a paper by Yuval-Davis et al. (2018), where they identify that immigration control has increasingly extended beyond nation-state border checks into key areas of everyday life such as housing, education, and work. The divide between 'them' and 'us' and controls over who may or may not belong is now integrated into society, creating socio-cultural borders, not just physical or geographical ones.

Data from my research shows that the coercive nature of that violence has been shown to involve gendered harm that is reproduced from mothers to children, too (Shobiye and Parker 2022). In that, co-author and I discuss the narratives of four women whose children have been directly or indirectly harmed by asylum controls inflicted on the mothers. The controls over housing, for example, result in regular moves for families, which can have a serious emotional and mental impact on children. I discuss this impact further in Chapter 5, Section 5.2, with Sarah's story. My findings also reflect Prowle's (2022) findings from her research with families in Wales, where she discusses the impact on children of disrupted schooling when -the Home Office the Home Office moves asylum-seeking families moves asylum-seeking families.  We can see the continued neglect in the UK today for women's asylum rights in the Nationality and Borders Act, which I mentioned above in Section 2.2.4. The asylum process in the UK does not involve just sanctuary – a safe and

welcoming place. Instead, it is a harsh and hostile process that fails to recognise or ignores women's and their children's needs.

Despite the above mentioned issues, research on women's asylum-seeking experiences is sparse. For example, only 10% of the articles published in the Journal of Refugee Studies between 1988 and 2009 contained references to feminism, gender or women in the title or abstract  (Hyndman 2010, p.454).  Yet the limited literature on and in the UK suggests significant issues that could and should be explored further. Some of the most recent literature has highlighted the continued and, at times, deliberate social and cultural exclusions for refugee women. For example, Cheung and Phillimore (2017) have demonstrated gendered challenges for social integration for refugees in the UK. Bhattacharyya (2018) discusses racialised subordination and hyper-exploitation of women as part of racial capitalism. I discuss such Feminist theories of social reproduction and marginalisation of mothers further in Chapter 3. Morrice's  (2007) review of refugees' lifelong learning and social integration suggests that societally, the UK undervalues forms of reciprocal unpaid labour through which refugee women are more likely to build their social capital than men. That undervaluing reflects gendered differences in the development of social capital and the undervaluing of unpaid, often caring and domestic, labour. My inference from Morrice's work and the Feminist theories of reductive social reproduction seems to be supported by work with racialised migrant (not specifically refugee) mothers from authors such as O'Neill (2018),  Erel (2018) and Reynolds et al. (2018). I discuss this body of work further in Chapter 3 (Social Theory and Refugee Education), particularly Section 3.4. However, none of that scholarship explores the specific experiences of racialised migrant or refugee (or British) mothers

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in UK nations beyond England.[18] So, I will now discuss why that gap may be significant in Wales.

## 2.4  WALES – NATION OF SANCTUARY?

Devolution means, even more than ever, that experiences in England will not be the same as experiences in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Although immigration is a reserved area of policy, lying with the UK Government through the Home Office, devolved powers and funding allow for the divergence of policy that may impact sanctuary seekers.  The Welsh Government aims to deliver policies that promote and deliver social justice and has sanctuary strategies that contrast with the hostility of the systems devised by the Home Office. I will now explore what the plan to be a 'Nation of Sanctuary' (Welsh Government 2019a) might mean in the context of the impact on Wales of the policies and systems discussed in the previous two sections.

Parts of Wales have a long immigration history, with multicultural communities in areas such as Cardiff docks (often referred to as Tiger Bay)[19]. Yet before introducing the dispersal system, few asylum seekers and refugees resided in Wales. In the turn-of-the-21st-century, Wales was home to just 2,000 refugees, primarily from Somalia, with 67% living in Cardiff (Robinson 2003a). Robinson's research revealed a lack of understanding among those required to work with and

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[18] Alison Prowle's (2022) PhD research focuses on practice and asylum seeking and refugee families. Her work is not specifically about mothers but there is overlap due to the focus on families. When I started my PhD outputs from Prowle's work were not available, so I have not referenced the work here. However, I reference her work in the following section, 2.4, and again on pages 114 and 132, when I discuss research and researchers in Wales.

[19] Tiger Bay is the name that was given, and is still used, to refer to the Cardiff docks area that is now known as Cardiff Bay. While it is a term that is recognised and used regularly by those living outside the area, it was and is not universally accepted by those local to the area.

support newly dispersed asylum seekers, showing 'cultures of ignorance, disbelief and denial' (2003b; 2003a).

The 1999 Immigration Act created four dispersal areas in Wales – Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham. The first dispersed asylum seekers arrived in Wales in May 2001. By February 2002, there had been approximately 700 arrivals into Cardiff  (Robinson 2003a; Crawley 2013). Most asylum seekers still arrive in Wales through this dispersal system. About half are sent to Cardiff, and the rest are spread across Swansea, Newport and Wrexham (Crawley and Crimes 2009a; Crawley 2013).[20] Recent figures have put the number of asylum seekers in Wales at just under 3,000 (Markaki 2017; Home Office 2019). The number of people living in Wales with refugee status is less clear, but past estimates have put the figure at anywhere between 6,000 and 10,000 (Crawley 2013). The NASS-run dispersal process means that asylum seekers are now systematically housed scattered across receiving cities rather than naturally coming together into homes close to each other.

The impact of dispersal has been explored internally  (Robinson 2003b)  and comparatively with other countries (Bakker et al. 2016). Such research shows that the UK's dispersal policy leaves sanctuary-seekers at economic, social and cultural disadvantages, increasing issues of isolation  (Robinson 2003b; Stewart and Shaffer 2015), particularly for women (Crawley and Crimes 2009a; Cheung and Phillimore 2017). In the first decade of dispersal in Wales, researchers found evidence to suggest that most asylum seekers granted Leave to Remain do not stay in Wales but

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[20] Recently all 22 local authorities in Wales became dispersal areas. However, this was not the case when I was doing my fieldwork and generating data.

leave for other parts of the UK (Crawley and Crimes 2009a). The evidence of disadvantages and the departure of refugees from Wales could suggest issues with the settlement and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. More recent literature has not fully explored those issues or whether they continue. Still, it might be possible to infer that things have changed, in relative terms, at least, from the limited evidence and scholarship available.

The Welsh Government has always taken a very different stance from the Home Office concerning asylum seekers and integration. There is a clear strategy for Wales to be a 'Nation of Sanctuary'  - a nation that welcomes sanctuary seekers and helps them feel they have a new home (Welsh Government 2019b). However, Immigration is a 'reserved', not a devolved area. It is the responsibility of the UK Government to limit the scope the Senedd and the Welsh Government have with which to take action. Regardless of Home Office policy, the Welsh Government has taken its humanitarian duties towards asylum seekers seriously. It consulted with early arrivals and communities and has steadfastly stuck to a policy of 'integration from the day of arrival' for two decades (Furlong and Hunt 2009; Welsh Government 2014; Welsh Government 2019a). The Scottish Government has taken a similar position to Wales  (Scottish Government 2015; Mulvey 2018).

In contrast, the Home Office framework for integration starts after granting Leave to Remain (Ager and Strang 2008). The Home Office's concerns of separating the 'deserving' from the 'undeserving' and the 'bogus' from the 'genuine' does not feature in Welsh Government documentation. Home Office policy statements focus on the need for unity, communities living together and dealing with the "pace and scale"  (Home Office 2001)  of change caused by recent migration  (Home Office

2018), while Welsh policy comments on individuals fulfilling potential  (Welsh Government 2014; Welsh Government 2019b). The Home Office's position remains consistent with the 1999 legislative exclusions from fundamental rights for asylum seekers. The devolved government in Wales has distinct and divergent public policy focus on providing sanctuary.

In the mid-2010s, the so-called 'refugee crisis' (as highlighted in Section 2.2.4) created a new settlement process and policy challenges for Wales, with a peak in the numbers of Syrian families and individuals entering Wales (Markaki 2017).  The 2015-20 Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (SVPR) Programme for 20,000 refugees has brought a fresh dimension to seeking and providing sanctuary in Wales. According to official immigration statistics, 959 people had been settled in Wales by the end of 2018 through the SVPR programme (Home Office 2019). Through this programme, the number of Syrians settled yearly has outstripped the highest national group of asylum seekers. The people who arrive in Wales as part of the VPR programme do so as refugees, not asylum seekers. They, therefore, have the right to work and are not allocated a home through NASS/section 95 of the 1999 Immigration Act. They are not sent to dispersal areas but to places with histories of very international migration, so minimal support infrastructure such as ESOL classes or translation services. Yet they also get targeted support, and families do not experience the disruptive and distressing impacts of frequent forced accommodation moves by the Home Office. Prowle (2022) discusses these impacts in her research,

highlighting how harmful they are for children.[21] The resettlement programmes, therefore, created a hierarchy of support for sanctuary seekers.

Research in Wales  (Guma et al. 2019) showed the civil society response there to the arrival of Syrian refugees was one of the grassroots support for fellow human beings. Communities in other parts of the UK also responded in supportive contrast to the hostility of UK political policy (Mayblin and James 2019). Formalised support systems, however, created a disparity for sanctuary seekers in Wales (and across the UK) based on the mode of entry – before embedding such an approach through the Nationality and Borders Act, the Rwanda Plan and the schemes for Ukrainian refugees. Local authorities who hosted refugees through this programme did so voluntarily, but they received dedicated, targeted funding from UK funds. The Home Office fully funded the first 12 months of SVPR settlement, including additional ESOL funding, with tapered funding for years two to five (Home Office 2017). The differences in support for resettled Syrians and all other Sanctuary seekers meant that the Home Office had effectively introduced two support systems for sanctuary across all UK nations, including Wales.

Over time, the policy positions between the two administrations have become increasingly opposed, reaching quite polarised positions. In 2022, the UK Government adopted a resettlement programme for Afghan refugees and a different approach for Ukrainians fleeing the war with Russia. The differing treatment based on the nationality of those seeking sanctuary has been widely condemned in Wales.

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[21] I return to this area with my own findings in Chapter 5, Section 5.2 with Sarah's story.

The divergence of policy between Westminster and Cardiff is rapidly increasing. With each new asylum and immigration scheme over the past two decades, the Welsh (Labour) Government has made very public statements about being a nation of sanctuary (Evans 2003; Sanders and Spencer 2016; Welsh Government 2019a).

It is worth noting that the Welsh Labour Party has always led the Welsh Government, but policy diverged from Home Office positions even when New Labour was the party in power in Westminster. The Welsh Government has always insisted that integration should begin on the day of arrival. In contrast, a Labour UK Government cemented the focus on granting Leave of Remain as the moment that integration policy should apply (Ager and Strang 2008; Welsh Government 2016; Welsh Government 2018). However, the divergence in policy between Cardiff and Westminster has undoubtedly increased, particularly since the introduction of the hostile environment.

Most recently, the Home Office has focused on criminalising asylum seekers crossing the Channel into the UK and establishing offshore processing systems with the Rwandan Government, deflecting criticism with support for Ukrainians (see Section 2.2.4). The Welsh Social Justice Department has been trying to take practical steps to increase support for all sanctuary seekers. For example, the department introduced a scheme for free transport for all refugees in Wales in 2022 (Welsh Government 2022b), despite core media outlets reporting on the scheme as though it were for Ukrainian refugees only  (BBC News 2022). The differences between the UK and Welsh Government positions have led to very open criticism from the Welsh Government  (Welsh Government 2021b). That criticism included Jane Hutt's public letter to the UK Minister of Immigration, as Social Justice Minister

for Wales, condemning the Nationality and Borders Act (Hutt 2022). In statements from Welsh Ministers, there continues to be a determination to be seen as a tolerant nation of sanctuary, regardless of the international criticism the legally dubious Home Office policy attracts.

Yet, some similarities exist between the Welsh Government and Home Office policies on integration. The emphasis on economic contributions is evident in both Welsh and Home Office policy documents. There are statements about making "a full contribution to Welsh Society" in the opening paragraph of a critical strategic plan for the Third Sector and Welsh Government (Sanders and Spencer 2016, p.2). Prowle's (2022) research shows that there is still much work to be done in both policy and practice in Wales. She highlights that practitioners and service providers often find themselves stuck between the restriction from the UK government and the sentiments from the Welsh Government, with sentiments often insufficient to support statements of intent in Welsh policy.

Furthermore, those statements, or plans, of intent are often lacking or internally conflicting. That internal conflict is shown with the Nation of Sanctuary Plan. (Welsh Government 2019b)  The plan also showed a general continued acceptance of the Home Office/Ager and Strang indicators and framework of Integration (Ager and Strang 2004; Ager and Strang 2008). The only point of contention seems to be when integration should start. [22]

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[22] In 2023, when this thesis was submitted, work was underway to revise the Nation of Sanctuary Plan and to develop a Migration Integration Framework for Wales. However, there were no outputs from that work that could be references or used at the time I submitted my thesis.

The Welsh Government has high-level action plans specifically on recognising qualifications, ESOL, essential skills and digital literacy to improve Higher Education options. It seems to use research-based evidence for these policies  (Ameen 2007). Yet key issues identified by researchers are still not genuinely addressed and are perhaps exacerbated by Welsh government policy. For example, providing ESOL classes through central Further Education hubs leaves many learners (still) facing issues with transport and childcare costs – as I discuss further in Section 2.5 and Chapter 3, particularly Section 3.4.  While the Welsh Government has taken some practical steps, within its devolved remit, to meet its 'Nation of Sanctuary' strategic goals, there is a lack of evidence to determine whether it is doing enough. The limited literature on sanctuary seekers in Wales has yet to fully explore the interaction between the reserved area of immigration policy and areas of life that are both devolved responsibilities and indicators for integration, such as education.

## 2.5  EDUCATED ARRIVALS

Evidence from existing research gives us some vital knowledge on the characteristics concerning education and employment of the asylum-seeking and refugee populations in the UK. That evidence shows us that sanctuary seekers are generally well-educated, with the equivalent of secondary school qualifications or more. The majority have worked in semi-skilled, skilled, professional or managerial jobs. Bloch's work (2002a; 2008) on the UK and Ameen's (2007) and Furlong and Hunt's  (2009) work on Wales all produce statistical evidence of the skills and working backgrounds of asylum seekers and refugees, with consistent results.

The most comprehensive data available for Wales when I started my PhD was from Ameen's study (2007). That audit found that 75% of sanctuary seekers living in Wales had completed secondary school, and 63% of the women surveyed had post-compulsory (FE or above) qualifications, compared with 57% of the men. That study found that 21% had completed a university-level course. Similarly, work by Crawley and Crimes (Crawley and Crimes 2009a) found that more than 25% of their survey respondents had a degree from their home country. The same survey also found that refugees in Wales have higher levels of postgraduate qualifications than their counterparts in other parts of the UK, at 8.1%. A Welsh Government (Holtom and Iqbal 2020) research report found that 67% of their 454 asylum seeker and refugee respondents had completed secondary school,  41% had post-compulsory qualifications, and  27% held higher education qualifications. The Welsh Government figures for secondary education are lower than earlier research, but the figure for higher education shows an increase.  There is a lack of more in-depth comprehensive quantitative data in this area[23]. Still, anecdotal information from third-sector organisations suggests that there has not been a significant change in the picture outlined above.

Therefore, most sanctuary seekers in Wales, as in other UK nations, have backgrounds as professional or skilled workers. Those who arrive as asylum seekers must survive on £5 a day, and those who come with or gain Leave to Remain are

[23] There is a recognised evidence gap of reliable demographic statistics for further and higher education in Wales that includes the qualifications of asylum seekers and refugees. I had planned to do some work using the Annual Population Survey to look at determining more recent figures but I had to drop this element of my research due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as discussed in Chapter 4, particularly Section 4.3.

often unemployed or in low-paid work. Crawley and Crimes' (2009a) survey also found that only 31.7% of refugee respondents were employed, compared with 63.4% in their country of origin[24]. The literature shows that previous human capital does not migrate with the individual and does not translate into employment of any form (once paid work is allowed). The key priorities highlighted in the literature relating to regaining/gaining new skills are English, IT skills, and gaining formal recognition for existing qualifications and work experience (Ameen 2007; Bloch 2008).

However, the existing literature also suggests that those seeking sanctuary are not just excluded from employment at higher rates than the rest of the population. They also find challenges in accessing appropriate levels of education and proving their skills and experience. Research in Scotland (Smyth and Kum 2010) on teaching professionals' challenges provides some specific insights. The issues discussed included having to leave certificates and documents behind when fleeing or needing to travel under a false name to stay safe. Therefore, research shows sanctuary seekers may arrive without proof of their skills and education.

Yet having evidence of qualifications and/or experience does not automatically enable an individual to use those skills in the UK. There is convincing evidence from academic work that employers, professional bodies and educational institutions often do not recognise overseas qualifications and work experience (Kirk et al. 2004; Bloch 2008; Crawley 2013). The most recent ESOL scholarship in Wales (Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019) questions whether employers are also

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[24] The overall UK employment rate, for comparison, for 2008-9 was approximately 75%
https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/elmr.2010.111.pdf

disproportionately concerned about levels of English skills, even in roles where communication is not a core requirement. Existing literature for the UK shows us that sanctuary seekers are disproportionately excluded from education. The same body of literature also repeatedly shows us that funding alongside transport costs, and for mothers, childcare continue to be unchanging barriers to accessing education (Bloch 2002a; Mohamoud et al. 2007; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019).  In  Wales, only 8.1% of refugees are in higher education compared to almost half the general population (Crawley 2014). Further research shows that educational exclusion is linked with a greater risk of exclusion from employment and/or economic deprivation in a neoliberal system that places such weight on qualifications, particularly for women (Cheung and Phillimore 2017).

There is evidence that community support for sanctuary seekers in Wales is strong, despite initial concerns expressed by a leading academic (Robinson 2003a). Guma et al.'s (2019) research on the civil society response to the Syrian crisis has shown much grassroots support, as mentioned on page 60. Chick and Hannagan-Lewis  (2019) also found informal sources of ESOL learning in places lacking a more formal system. Earlier work from Furlong and Hunt (2009) had shown much potential support for migrant communities and everyday learning in parts of Cardiff. Organisational websites show support centres across Wales offering catering opportunities, arts and crafts sessions, informal and more formal ESOL Classes, short courses on hate crime and a range of broader 'integration' focused projects often targeting mothers  (Oasis Cardiff 2020; Welsh Refugee Council 2020; Llewelyn 2021). Yet, there is a dearth of evidence exploring the role and impact of these community-based learning activities for sanctuary seekers. There appears to be a

distinct gap in the literature, which my research should start to fill. I went into refugee communities to understand those environments and the role of learning for sanctuary seekers. Through my research in those spaces, I contribute to the field of refugee education, specifically the area of social learning and the well-being of sanctuary seekers. I discuss the gap my work fills further in the following Chapter 3.

## 2.6  SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the UK has a long and robust history of racialised and gendered immigration policy. It is from that history that the internationally condemned Nationality and Borders Act and 'Rwanda Plan' in 2022 developed. Successive UK governments had sought to restrict immigration from the Global South, except for periods when Commonwealth labour was useful and convenient. Such policies have been described as evidence of racial capitalism (Bhattacharyya 2018), as discussed in Section 2.2. I return to these concepts in Chapter 3. My discussion on the immigration and asylum context for the UK and Wales specifically provides context for my research questions and the transitions, barriers, and support that mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales may experience. Together, this chapter and Chapter 3's discussion on social theory and refugee education literature frame my research questions..

Those same policies have also favoured white migration from Global North countries, including Commonwealth nations such as Australia, through patrilineal rules in the 1960s or joining the single market and then the EU. In the past two or three decades, the focus has shifted to controlling forced migration and restricting spontaneous asylum claims. That shift in focus has led to new forms of racism and

racialisation, described by some scholars as 'cultural racism' (Hall 2017b). That shift has been led by policymakers seeking to control borders based on the continued notion that 'outsiders' are problematic 'others' who are detrimental to Britishness and society in anything but small (useful) numbers. Successive governments have created and embedded a hierarchical structure of citizenship and residency. State leaders have consciously developed a societal sense of a need to keep problematic outsiders out.  By dehumanising them, they have successfully redefined asylum seekers and refugees as potential burdens, problems, or criminals. By 2023, leaders had made those structures and systems more explicitly cruel and racist. The current government has explicitly stated a goal of dismantling systems established to protect us all from the human rights abuses perpetrated during the Second World War.

The racialisation and cruelty in UK immigration and asylum policy have enabled the specific rights of protections for women to be ignored and further violations perpetrated by the British state. Women seeking sanctuary in the UK experience an intersecting oppression of racialised and gendered policy and experiences. Women are more likely to experience sexual and domestic violence, yet authors of the 1951 Convention did not recognise such issues. UK law reflects the 1951 Convention's criteria for recognition as a refugee. It is, therefore, a challenge for women to claim asylum and be granted refugee status for such reasons.

However, these claims are increasingly dealt with under the protection of a social group. In the UK, women and mothers claiming asylum are depicted as vulnerable and helpless or scroungers whose cultural backgrounds make them utterly unsuited for life in the UK. Despite promises that this would not happen,

pregnant women and those with young children are detained and dispersed away from social support networks (Canning 2017). Research has shown that third-sector organisations lever constructions of vulnerability with sanctuary-seeking women and children as a tool for gaining resources and funds  (Gateley 2015; Mesarič and Vacchelli 2019). Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that sanctuary-seeking women face more significant challenges and exclusion than their male counterparts. There is evidence of increased difficulties with social networks, language proficiency, health, household budgeting, education, employment and quality housing  (Freedman 2016; Canning 2017; Cheung and Phillimore 2017).

Since the inception of the dispersal system (which came at the same time as devolution), the Welsh Government's policies have differed from the Home Office's. The Welsh Government has, for example, always insisted that integration for sanctuary seekers should start on the day of arrival, not when Leave to Remain is granted. In recent years, the Welsh Government has openly condemned Home Office policy, most recently the National and Borders Act (Welsh Government 2021b; Hutt 2022). The Welsh Government has also introduced measures to support asylum seekers and refugees where devolved powers allow, such as free transport.  (Welsh Government 2022b). However, Welsh Government policy implementation has not always matched its strategy. Most significantly, for my research, the devolved government has yet to take action on the long-standing childcare issues for asylum-seeking mothers (Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019; Oxfam Cymru and Women's Equality Network Wales 2020).

A noticeable area where Welsh policy implementation is not aligned with its strategy for sanctuary seekers is education. The Welsh Government recognises, in

its Nation of Sanctuary Plan, the importance of ESOL, for example. Yet the Welsh

Government has no national data on ESOL funding, despite an FE policy that should

be learner-focused and demand-led (Welsh Government 2017; 2019a). While the

Welsh Government eligibility criteria for funding and access to post-compulsory

education includes asylum seekers as home students, that is not supported with the

financing and funding needed for those living on £40 per week and raising children.

There are also very few paths for sanctuary seekers to convert existing qualifications

or access education that are not focused on English language skills and a route to

employment, regardless of whether that employment matches the individual's skills

and experiences.

Meanwhile, at a civil society level, there is a range of opportunities for

community learning in Wales that are actively pursued and funded. Yet there is little

exploration of their role for sanctuary seekers and local communities beyond the

presumption of integration and skills for employment. That lack of evidential inquiry

contributed to forming my research focus and questions. In the next chapter, I will

discuss the academic literature on refugee education in the UK and Wales and

demonstrate why and where my research questions on transitions, barriers, and

supportive inclusion developed.

# 3   SOCIAL THEORY AND REFUGEE EDUCATION

## 3.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an academic literary context for my research findings (presented in Chapters 5-7).  I discuss empirical refugee adult education literature within a discussion of prominent theories relevant to my overall framework and data analysis. My findings highlight social learning processes, as defined in Chapter 1 Section 1.3, by exploring how my participants learnt through social and community interactions, not just classroom instruction. However, such an approach is not commonplace in current refugee education literature. Therefore, in this chapter, I discuss a range of critical social theories and ideas and their application in refugee education literature, demonstrating their relevance to my research. Through that discussion, I lead the reader into a focused review of the small areas where social learning has been used as a theory or concept in UK refugee education literature.

I have structured this chapter into distinct areas of relevant theoretical concepts and theories as I funnel into the discussion on social learning theories. Firstly, I discuss some vital sociological concepts on education[25] and inequality and their application in the empirical literature. I specifically discuss social reproduction and social justice, integration and inclusion, and language education. Secondly, I briefly explore social psychology theories and concepts of learning and their application in the empirical

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[25] I use terms such as education, learning and social learning based on the definitions I outlined in Chapter 1 and in the glossary in my Appendices. When I refer to education, I mean formal education and when I refer to learning I mean both formal education and informal learning. I discuss social learning as a term in Section 5.3

literature. I focus on community-based social and informal learning. Thirdly, I return to a brief discussion of UK refugee education academic research and the scarcity of empirical literature on women. I finish the chapter with a short recap highlighting the gap my research fills.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a contextual discussion of using fundamental social theories for my research in existing UK refugee education empirical literature. However, the academic literature on UK adult refugee education is relatively small, particularly research focusing specifically on women, mothers, or Wales. Approximately fifteen years ago, Pinson and Arnot  (2007)  described the UK's refugee education research literature as a 'wasteland'. In the years since, the landscape has not changed dramatically, particularly the literature on women or mothers and the literature focused solely on Wales. Therefore, I draw on the broader international research literature on refugee education and the related areas of race and migration education.

## 3.2  EDUCATION, INEQUALITY, SOCIAL CHANGE

This section provides an overview of key academic debates on systems of reproduction and representation (and their relationship). These debates are relevant for my analysis and the presentation of my findings in Chapters 5-7. Scholars such as Bourdieu  (1977; 2018b) and founding Critical Race Theorists (CRT) such as Bell (1995) and Delgado (1992) presented education systems as ones that perpetuate existing inequalities and maintain social hierarchies through social cultural and legal structures of exclusion.  Their theories have been instrumental in developing some aspects of Feminist theories of social reproduction, as outlined by Bhattacharya

(2017). Bourdieu was focused on class structures in Europe. In contrast, early CRT and Black Feminist scholars focused on racial oppression through legal systems, including an emphasis on the self-perpetuating impact of the resulting lack of representation in the research, education, and legal systems. Feminist scholars such as Fraser (1995a) have critiqued application and understanding of the concept of representation to address socio-economic injustices. Fraser's arguments on the need for recognition framed my analysis, addressing my research questions on the barriers faced by my participants in Chapter 6 and the title of this thesis.

Some educationalists have focused on education as a source of social justice. They have seen the potential for social change through education. Such thinking came from within Black Feminist scholarship, providing consideration of the supportive and empowering potential of learning, even within marginalising systems. For example, Bell hooks (2009) argued that engaged pedagogy could empower students to resist the marginalisation and oppression they face in society. Mezirow (2009), in contrast to hooks, developed a transformative theory of learning that saw education as a potential tool for social change by changing the attitudes and behaviours of marginalised groups to align with those of the majority. My analysis in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 is more aligned with hooks than Mezirow but is more informed by learning theories focused more on social processes than pedagogy.

Other theorists have focused more on social processes in communities rather than systems and pedagogy within institutions. For example, Lave and Wenger (1991) developed theories of communities of practice based on practitioners and other members of communities learning together. More recently, Wenger (2018) has

developed a social theory of learning, which I used for my definitions of social learning found in Chapter 1. Wenger's theoretical framework Seminal to theorists exploring learning as a social process is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning. Vygotsky saw learning as the "acquisition of many specialised abilities for thinking about a variety of things" (p. 83) from human-environment interaction, seen associal and cultural interactions.  Vygotsky's work has been influential in educational theory and practice, particularly in work on and with childhood development and school environments. His work has also been influential in adult education. His influence shows in Mezirow's transformative learning theories , Lave and Wenger's (1991) concepts of communities of practice and Wenger's (2018) and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) theories of social learning and social learning spaces, which I discuss further in the next Sections 3.2.1. and 3.3.1.  In the following sections, I will discuss the theories I have mentioned in more depth and show how they have been applied in empirical refugeed education and learning literature.

## 3.2.1  SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Bourdieu's theories of social capital and social reproduction have significantly influenced empirical refugee education literature, particularly concerning social networks and integration, with critiques highlighting gender prominent in some broader feminist literature on migrant women.  So, I must give some dedicated space in this thesis to his work. Bourdieu wrote about the role of education in the reproduction of social class inequalities, including through what he termed 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977). The concepts of capital and social reproduction are prominent in migration, race and feminist scholarship as a means to demonstrate and explain racial and gender inequalities, as I highlighted in Section 2.3.  In the rest of this section, I outline the fundamental concepts of forms of capital and social reproduction and demonstrate how they are relevant to my research through their use in existing refugee education empirical literature.

The key concepts from Bourdieu's work are the forms of capital he defined and their relation to the concept of 'habitus' and social reproduction in and through education. The ideas he developed showed how class structures are maintained and reproduced by societal systems such as education  (Bourdieu 1977; 2018b). Bourdieu defined 'habitus' as the relationship between the capacity to produce classifiable practices/works and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these same practices (showing 'taste'). In simpler terms, habitus is a social group's typical values, attitudes, and behaviours. Each social group has its own 'habitus' distinct from others. Social and cultural classifications are built through those 'habitus' forms and the distinctions between them. Societal systems are developed by the social

group in positions of power. Bourdieu argued that four forms of capital built and maintained class structures in society. Forms of capital are the types of resources available to an individual in society. For Bourdieu, the dominant group in society hold and uses economic resources to wield and maintain power. Bourdieu defined those resources as economic capital - the direct monetary value of labour, products, and services. The other three forms of capital are all related to economic capital and the maintenance of power by creating social structures of exclusion. Cultural capital is knowledge and familiarity with the legitimate or dominant culture that is a resource for societal advantage. Social capital is the social connections (networks) and obligations that provide resources for societal opportunities. Symbolic capital is the resources available to an individual through prestige, recognition, or honour (Bourdieu 1977).

Bourdieu argued that capital is accumulated through labour appropriated by ruling classes, providing the potential capacity to produce profits and reproduce itself (Bourdieu  Nicole (ed) 1986). For Bourdieu, European education systems played a vital role in the retention of resources within the dominant classes. Keeping knowledge of types of cultural resources, such as books, arts, forms of language and etiquette, restricted to the dominant classes creates cultural capital. Those who got the most elite education had the most cultural capital. The dominant group could then exclude those without this knowledge from their social networks, restricting access to the most advantageous social capital. In turn, lack of access to elite spaces and networks limits opportunities for recognition, honour, or a position of status within society – symbolic capital. Those outside the dominant group would therefore lack the knowledge, relationships, and recognition that places someone in

a position to gain access to economic resources held by that dominant group. For Bourdieu, European education systems perpetuated the distinction and division between social groups by reproducing the habitus of the dominant group from one generation to the next – social reproduction. For Bourdieu, as long as the habitus of the groups in positions of power continued to reproduce social and cultural privilege through education, so would social inequalities. Redistribution of wealth and power would be impossible, while cultural capital distribution was limited (Bourdieu 1977). Education, for Bourdieu, was a societal system built for the reproduction of class privilege, hierarchy, and power.

In this thesis, I use this notion of education as a societal system that perpetuates marginalisation and existing power structures as a lens for my analysis. This perspective is consistent with my overall Intersectional Feminist framework whereby I explore my participants' experiences in the context of the UK's structural racism and gendered systems that I discussed in Chapter 1, Sections 1.2 and 1.5, and Chapter 2, Sections 2.2 and 2.3. I use Bourdieu's concepts of forms of capital and social reproduction as a theoretical means of situating my participants' experiences of education as a core system within a societal structure of oppression and marginalisation.

However, I do not use Bourdieu's theories in isolation. I am also influenced by feminist theories of social reproduction, particularly as the concept of intersectionality informs my research framework. As discussed in Section 1.5, the development of Black Feminist theory and the concept of Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) showed how Black and racialised women experience multi-layered forms of discrimination

and oppression. Constructions and structures of race and gender, often class or sexuality, developed those interwoven layers of marginalisation (Davis 1982; Lorde 1984b; hooks 2000). Black Feminists argued for increased representation at all education levels to address experiential exclusion in research and classrooms (Hill-Collins 1990). Debates on representation continue. Feminist scholars such as Fraser (1995a), whose work I discuss later in this section on pages 80-82,  have critiqued the application of representation as a standalone idea. Representation is not seen as a solution to deliver dramatic change or full social justice but rather a step towards those goals. Black Feminist Lorde (1984b), for example, argued that revolutionary change is not a single event but is developed from vigilantly taking any opportunity, no matter how small, to make a "genuine" change. However, she also wrote powerfully and persuasively that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (1984b, p.106). That is to say, oppressed groups could not expect to use the systems of their oppression to liberate them from it.

Some Feminist research has also involved the concepts of social reproduction and social capital. Mothers are expected to raise children who conform to socio-cultural expectations. Mothering is, therefore, crucial for social reproduction. Yet capitalist societies only value endeavours with a direct economic connection. Bhattacharya (2018), hooks (2000), Hill Collins (1994), and Erel and Reynolds (2018a) have all written about the undervaluing of mothers' unpaid labour and the reductive constructions of racialised motherhood. They have all argued that such constructions perpetuate inequalities, marginalisation, and oppression of women. Some literature on refugees discusses the connections between capital, social reproduction, and social exclusion.   For example, Lamba's  (2003) exploration of

experiences in Canada demonstrates the limits of and exclusions from social and cultural capital for refugees.  Morrice  (2007) also uses the concept of social capital to understand the role of lifelong learning in social integration for refugee mothers in England.

In education research in the UK, critical race scholarship and social reproduction concepts have helped understand racialised systemic inequalities in education. For example, they have recently been used to develop concepts of the hidden or even absent curricula at all levels of education - primary, secondary, and tertiary (Wilkinson 2014; Figueroa 2017; Andrews 2020). Such developments have further highlighted systemic racism within education, building on earlier evidence of the impacts of constructions of race through conscious or unconscious assumptions about students' abilities  (Figueroa 1991; Figueroa 2004). Most specifically, Black British Feminist scholarship from Mirza (1992) explored how inequality shaped young Black women's lives in the UK. She demonstrated how the constructions of race and gender negatively impacted Black girls' educational attainment. Mirza showed that such constructions created systemic, pedagogical, and individual biases that restricted attainment. Such intersectional scholarship has continued at all levels of education in the UK. For example, Bhopal and Henderson (2021) have recently written about the system of competition created between gender and race inequalities in Higher Education. The authors drew on findings from two qualitative projects investigating the effects in UK universities of the Athena SWAN (ASC) and Race Equality (REC) Charter Marks. They conducted a total of 45 interviews across both projects. The authors concluded that these charter marks are competitions where gender wins at the expense of racialised women. I discuss more recent Black

and Intersectional Feminist scholarship in Section 3.3, where I focus on migrant and refugee education literature on women.

However, representation within and through systems such as education is not the only concept presented as vital for social change, redistribution of wealth and power or reduced inequality. The significance of representation in education (and the role of education itself in movements for social change and justice) remains debated and contested (Power 2012). Fraser is a Feminist scholar whose work highlights the conflict between the role of education as either an agent for social change or social reproduction (or both). Fraser (1998) developed a theoretical framework focused on cultural factors for gender social justice of three interwoven and interdependent phenomena, recognition, representation, and redistribution. Fraser saw "status inequality" (2007, p.20) as misrecognition.

Fraser argued that social justice could only come through parity of participation in society and that "institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value" (2007, p.20) led to misrecognition (status inequality). Fraser's emphasis on cultural value and hierarchies are visibly influenced by Bourdieu's concepts of capital, particularly cultural capital. Bourdieu (2018b) had argued that misrecognition of the social role of education gives educational qualifications and certificates value that makes the educational system a cornerstone in the reproduction of power within social groups. Fraser (1998) connected the issue of misrecognition with those of misrepresentation and misdistribution of economic resources. For Fraser, representation that might lead to socio-economic redistribution requires genuine recognition. She (1998) argued that representation had been reduced to presence and proportionality and

not participatory parity between men and women. Women, according to Fraser, are too often present in positions of power, privilege and influence in a tokenistic, restricted or reductive way. Women's capabilities and capacity for participation in positions of power and influence are not recognised - misrecognition. Where women may gain social and cultural capital outwardly, their symbolic capital in society remains more limited than men's. Achieving full parity, Fraser claimed, requires full recognition that goes beyond simply overcoming prejudice to a genuine understanding of (women's) capabilities and abilities in transformative, not just affirmative, ways (Fraser 1995a; Fraser 2000). In other words, for change to gender equality to happen, society needs to move beyond simply affirming women's right to be present and represented. Societal systems must actively support and recognise women's capacity and capabilities to act, decide, and influence.

Fraser's theories have become particularly important in Feminist research as she used gender discrimination and women's disadvantages compared with men to illustrate her theory. For a long time, British policy and research had focused on achieving redistribution of power and wealth in society using a system of meritocracy delivery by or through education. Increased representation could break the barriers preventing meritocracy (Power 2012). However, Fraser's focus on cultural factors highlights the limits of the type of representation that only allows women or a minoritized group to be present without parity of participation (Fraser 1995a). Her theories show the contradictory perceptions of education as either an agent for social change or the social reproduction of inequalities (or both).

Fraser's emphasis on recognition, not just representation, is therefore relevant to my exploration of the challenges my participants faced with learning. It helped me to look beyond the tangible barriers of childcare and funding and analyse interactions experienced in the context of a society where there are misconceptions and myths about women and mothers who seek asylum and/or are refugees. I discuss those misconceptions in Chapter 2, Section 2.3. Furthermore, Fraser's idea of the perpetuation of inequality and discrimination through misrecognition connects with both Bordieuan and Feminist concepts of social reproduction I have discussed in this section. Existing empirical literature has demonstrated that sanctuary seeking women are excluded from parity of participation in education and learning (Crawley 2014; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019), perpetuating their marginalisation. In Chapter 6 I explore the barriers my participants faced with learning and used Frasers' concepts of recognition and misrecognitionto understand the reach and impacts of those political and public misconceptions. .

However, Fraser is not the only scholar to have developed theories of recognition that relate to inequality and women. For example, Honneth (1995) also developed a three-sided theory of recognition demonstrated by family, civil society, and the state. There also is recent research using the concept of misrecognition, with reference to Honneth, to understanding racism (Xie et al. 2021). However, Fraser's perspective seems more pertinent or my work. Most specifically, Fraser's explicit use of Bourdieu's concepts of capital combined with an idea of transformative cultural recognition resonated most closely with my work. This point is particularly relevant to current empirical literature evidencing isolation and a lack of social and cultural capital for sanctuary seekers, as I mentioned in Section 2.3.

Yet there is also literature that suggests informal and community-based learning can be significant for reducing isolation and increasing integration through the development of (albeit limited) cultural and social capital within local communities. I discuss some of that literature further in Sections 3.2.2, 3.3.1, and 3.4 of this chapter. In Chapters 5 and 7, I discuss the positive changes learning created in the lives of my participants when their needs and capabilities were recognised. Additionally, existing literature includes Fraser's conceptual framing to understand the impact of false constructions that are misrecognition. Hopkins et al. (2017) showed how such constructions cause discrimination encounters of misrecognition. Mangan and Winter (2017) demonstrated experiences of invalidation and misrecognition in Higher Education. Most significantly, the notion of status inequality and hierarchies connect the racialised hierarchies of citizenship and immigration I discuss in Chapter 3.

Theories of the role of education as a force for social change or transformation, rather than reproduction, have been influential in education scholarship on marginalised groups. Education as a means for social change is prominent in Black Feminist and intersectional scholarship. Black Feminist bell hooks' (2009) writing on critical teaching and engaged pedagogy are particularly relevant to my work. Hooks argued that education and learning could be processes through which students learn not just their prescribed curriculum but also how to be reflective and take a critical stance on society outside the classroom. Hooks argued for learning as a process that can free marginalised students from some of society's oppression.  These arguments seemed significant to me when exploring empirical literature on community learning for racialised women in the UK, particularly the

writings I discuss in Sections 3.3.1 and 3.4 of this chapter, such as Thompson and Nasimi's (2020) writing on the empowering nature of community-based learning for Muslim women in London. I implicitly considered hooks arguments with literature on learning and racialised women when interpreting my participants' positive educational and learning experiences in Chapters 5 and 7.

However, there is scholarship that presents education as a source of social change, but in contrast, for me, with hooks' (2009) arguments on critical resistance and Fraser's (1998) calls for recognition. Mezirow developed a theory of transformative learning that is used in UK refugee education literature. He described transformative learning as "a rational, metacognitive process of reassessing reasons that support problematic meaning perspectives or frames of reference." (2009, p.103) He argued that learning is completely culturally contextual, so who does the learning, what they learn, and when, where and how, are parts of the cultural system or functions. His theory focused on learning to change culturally or contextually "problematic frames of reference" (2009, p.92) of adult individuals or groups to make them more discerning and open-minded. Arguably, Mezirow's work depicts the learner as the one whose mindset is problematic. Learning helps teach that individual how to think and behave in a way more acceptable to society.; for sanctuary seekers and migrants that could make education a tool for cultural assimilation. Therefore, I see an essential difference between Mezirow's theory and those of hooks. Mezirow seems to have argued for learning as a process that can help marginalised students to conform to society's expectations and oppressions. In contrast, hooks argued for pedagogy that empowers students to resist and challenge.

Mezirow's transformative learning theory is prominent in refugee education literature, although not without critiques. Onsando and Billet (2009) argued that transformative learning interventions at Further Education colleges in Australia would reduce discrimination against African students with refugee backgrounds. They suggested that such interventions would help refugee students achieve 'meaningful' outcomes (2009, p.80). However, Morrice (2013b) has argued that there is a 'darker side' to an increasing focus on the transformative effects of formal learning for refugees. Such transformative learning theories, she claimed, do not consider the amount of unlearning and deconstruction, rather than construction, required of those seeking sanctuary in a new country. As I progressed through my research project and analysed my data, I found Morrice's critique convincing. I found an approach that could position my participants and mothers seeking sanctuary more broadly, as the problem learning could and should transform as further marginalisation. Viewing learning as transformative in such a way would perpetuate the false constructions and 'othering' I discuss throughout Chapter 2.

## 3.2.2  INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

Two other concepts are often found in UK refugee education literature relevant to discussions on the role of forms of learning and education for equality. Those concepts are integration and inclusion, with the former commonly used about immigration and the latter a key topic for education. I do not have the space to explore them in this thesis fully, so I focus on their specific relevance for sanctuary

seekers and learning. Integration, when related to migration, has been defined[26] as a two-way process of adaption and change through which migrants are incorporated into society (Ager and Strang 2008). Inclusion is a critical concept in education and can be defined as increasing participation parity by recognising and embracing differences to benefit a group or structure (Moore et al. 2004; Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2018). However, both terms have been subject to heavy academic critique, which I will briefly explain before discussing the use of the terms in refugee education literature concerning equality.

Integration is a heavily contested and debated term, particularly regarding who needs to change. Some scholars have argued that integrating sanctuary seekers is thinly disguised assimilation (Bowskill et al. 2007). Integration as a process operates in a context where sanctuary seekers are dehumanised and demonised. State expectations have particular significance for sanctuary-seeking mothers with their societal roles in social reproduction and whether they are considered suitable to raise children who are British enough (Lonergan 2015). Therefore, some researchers and policymakers prefer to use the term inclusion. The concept of inclusion is used widely for different social groups and contexts. Inclusion is not as directly or immediately associated with migration as integration. However, the idea of inclusion arguably also necessitates acknowledging the existence of exclusion, which in turn brings the question of whether full inclusion for all is desirable or achievable (Edwards et al. 2001; Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2018).

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[2626] Fuller definitions of both integration and inclusion are in the Glossary in the Appendices.

Inclusion remains a term frequently used in education in policy, service provision, and research regarding degrees of parity of participation and equality (Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2018; Abdulrahman et al. 2021). I will now discuss how the concepts have been used in refugee education research and related scholarship areas concerning relevant policy areas addressed in Chapter 2.

Policymakers maintain a narrative of using education as part of a broader system for integration (Ager and Strang 2004; APPG 2016; Welsh Government 2022c). Yet empirical literature shows how local educational systems have become one of several areas of life through which sanctuary seekers and, to some degree, voluntary migrants are marginalised. Intersectional British Feminist scholarship in the UK has, for example, demonstrated how immigration control entered everyday spaces. Border control now sits in systems for core areas of everyday life, including education (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018). I discuss these developments in Section 2.2.4.

Arguably, the concept of integration developed from those racialised perceptions of problematic 'others' who need to become more like 'us', i.e., more British, as discussed in Chapter 2. In comparison, the concept of inclusion developed because there were groups in society firmly excluded from spheres of influence, power and privilege.  The literature on integration and inclusion most relevant for my research with sanctuary-seeking mothers is used in social policy and sociology writing. Most notably, I have focused on scholarship that explores notions of recognition, acceptance and belonging with discussions of integration versus assimilation and inclusion versus exclusion (Edwards et al. 2001; Youkhana 2015). Notably, the Home Office has had policies and indicators of integration (Ager and

Strang 2004), while in Wales, the term inclusion has become used more (Welsh

Government 2020a; Welsh Government 2022a). My research does not aim to

unpick these concepts further. Instead I focus on the ideas of reciprocal value for

the individual and the community found in theories of social learning and social

learning spaces. However, the concepts of inclusion and integration are intertwined

with the concepts of social capital and networks found in refugee education

literature.

Some refugee and migration education and integration scholars have

developed an understanding that capital and habitus are contextual. That is, there is

clear evidence that social and cultural capital in one geographical or temporal

context is not directly transferrable to another, which provides insight into the

limitations of the concepts and theories of forms of capital. Furthermore, exploring

the contextual limits and implications of capital has been used to show where and

how education can be a system that reproduces those contextual boundaries. For

example, Lamba's (2003) research in Canada showed that refugees could not build

their social and cultural capital through education there. He quantitatively explored

the economic and social integration experiences of 525 adult refugees and 91 youth

(his term) refugees, using structured interviews. Participants were selected using a

systematic sampling strategy across 9,198 refugee records from Citizenship and

Immigration Canada. Lamba concluded that the respondents the value of refugees'

human capital was low in Canada and to compensate they turned to their close ties.

They made new social networks and routes to employment through contacts within

the refugee communities or through their family and friends, not through those who

were not-refugees in places of education or workplaces. Therefore, their social

capital in Canada remained limited, not extending much beyond immediate refugee communities. The limitations placed refugees perhaps, according to Lamba, particularly women, at a disadvantage due to limited support networks to provide information and knowledge and to share caring responsibilities.

Cheung and Phillimore's (2014) work with data on refugees in the UK suggested that social capital alone does not aid employability, although its absence hurts employment prospects. Such literature generally indicates that a migrant or refugee arriving in a new Global North society cannot transfer social or cultural capital. Women seeking sanctuary face more challenges with social capital and converting it into economic capital than men (Smyth and Kum 2010; Cheung and Phillimore 2017).  Economic capital for asylum seekers and refugees (as employment rates or employment levels) in the Global North is not usually aligned to skills and experience, wherever that education and training takes place (Lamba 2003; Ameen 2007; Bloch 2008; Furlong and Hunt 2009).

Yet the barriers and challenges sanctuary-seeking women and mothers face with educational access and outcomes have not been thoroughly explored. Instead, researchers and policymakers have continuously reduced women to their biological, domestic caring roles, their unpaid labour. I see this where recognition of women's experiences is limited to a section, paragraph, or note on childcare/caring responsibilities  (Bloch 2002a; Ager and Strang 2004; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). In Section 2.3, I emphasise how much support with childcare is needed for asylum-seeking mothers. However, I also find that reducing women's experiences to childcare only perpetuates marginalisation issues. In such reductive writing, I see

evidence of Feminist theories of social reproduction, particularly when related to racial capitalism[27], where women's unpaid labour is demanded but not valued by society. For me, there is also a connection with Fraser's theories of misrecognition and social injustice. The link Bhattacharyya (2018) made between racial capitalism and social reproduction explains perpetuating intersectional marginalisation, as I highlighted in Section 1.5. Sanctuary-seeking women's capacities and capabilities become invisible in such reductive writing in a society that does not value women's cultural and social contributions through unpaid labour and yet places the burden for refugee and migrant mothers integrating or assimilating children such labour (Bhattacharyya 2018; Erel et al. 2018b).

The concepts and theories I have discussed in this chapter, relating to education, social justice and social inequality, are often used in refugee and refugee education literature regarding inclusion and exclusion. For example, Creese et al. (2011) discuss the cycle and perpetuation of disadvantage and exclusion stemming from relatively small refugee social networks isolated from/in wider communities. Creese's focus on social networks echoes Bourdieuan notions of social capital. There is an influence of the idea that social networks can be a form of capital linked to wealth, influence and power.  The discussion of disadvantage also shows a possible effect of theories of social reproduction of disadvantage, exclusion and oppression.

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[27] See Chapters 1 and 2 for definitions and discussions of racial capitalism

In the UK, researchers such as North (2013) have argued that education for migrant women can be transformative and a potential source of social justice. However, Stevenson, Morrice, and Klenk presented opposite experiential evidence. Stevenson (2012) has shown that educational institutions discriminate and marginalise. Klenk (2017), citing Morrice's critique of transformative learning, conducted qualitative study on a single site where women studied ESOL. She conducted interviews with five women learning ESOL and one interview with the ESOL project coordinator. Klenk centred the five ESOL learnings experiences in her analysis and argued that ESOL education policy fails to meet refugee women's and their children's needs. Klenk concluded that the binary focus on employed versus unemployed negatively impacted refugee women in a London community. Klenk found that women saw their ESOL learning achievements as 'lesser' than men, as fewer, mostly the mothers, reached the employability standard of a level 3 qualification. For the mothers in Klenk's study, their barriers to attaining the level ESOL certification included childcare and yet that the increased exclusion from employment opportunities was an issue that affected their children's well-being, not just the women's individual economic positions. Moreover, we know from broader Feminist social reproduction literature that migrant mothers often bear the burden of societal expectations and constructions of successful integration and 'good' migrants' for both themselves and their children (Gabriel and Harding 2009b; Bhattacharyya 2018; Erel 2018).

In the same paper, Klenk (2017) argued convincingly that these social exclusions perpetuate notions of refugee women as a burden to society even though they are often active social, cultural, and/or economic participants in the local

communities, using and learning in an informal and immersive way. I see Klenk's arguments as related to constructions of social, cultural, and economic contributors that support the hierarchies of citizenship that I discussed in my previous chapter, Bourdieu's concepts of capital and Feminist theories of social reproduction. Mothers' social contributions to unpaid labour are less valued than economic contributions. Moreover, using Fraser's notion of recognition, refugee mothers may not be seen – recognised - as either actual or potential economic contributors due to the constructed perceptions that they are beggars and burdens. However, Klenk does not discuss refugee mothers who do paid work in depth. A lack of genuine understanding and support for refugee women and mothers' capabilities creates and perpetuates notions of a surplus and burdensome population (see sections on racial capitalism in Chapter 2). Klenk argues that these constructs damaged the self-worth of the mothers in her research. Research by authors such as Klenk shows that excluding sanctuary-seeking mothers from learning, such as formal ESOL classes, goes beyond exclusion from classrooms. Mothers not included in ESOL education for qualifications are excluded from parity of opportunity and participation in the labour market. Their marginalisation in terms of perceived worth and integration, both to themselves and wider society, is perpetuated as UK society values economic contributions above other forms.

### 3.2.3  LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Language is, in Bourdieuan terms, a form of cultural and social capital related to symbolic power and, therefore, utilisable for economic capital  (Bourdieu 1991). The 'habitus' of a social group includes linguistic norms and values. Bourdieu primarily conceived linguistic capital as a form of cultural capital with accents, dialects, vocabulary, and etiquette that formed part of class distinctions in European societies (Bourdieu 1991). However, the concept has been used to develop an understanding of the cultural power dynamics of colonialism and postcolonialism (Hall and Bucholtz 1995; Hall 2021). The idea of linguistic capital has been used to explore the global hegemony of the English language. The continued postcolonial monolingualism of most of the UK is also prominent in debates on factors for migration to and seeking sanctuary in the UK. Therefore, I will briefly highlight significant points in those debates here.

Language continues to be central in discussions on integration into British and other Global North societies (Nawyn et al. 2012). Even though the era of multiculturalism and its insistence that integration is a two-way process  (Ager and Strang 2004; Craig 2008b), the English language has remained critical for cultural capital in the UK.  Therefore, ESOL education features very prominently in refugee education research and policy literature in the UK, often directly or indirectly related to concepts of capital and Intersectionality. A common theme I found in the ESOL education literature was that of isolation and social networks. Existing research in the UK consistently demonstrates that sanctuary seekers can find themselves relatively isolated and excluded from wider communities. Isolation has gendered implications,

such as deprivation of social support during pregnancy and childbirth and labour market disadvantage (Healey 2010; Canning 2017; Cheung and Phillimore 2017), as discussed in the previous chapter (Sections 2.2.4 and 2.3)**.**

Language skills are recognised in policy and research to play a vital role in alleviating social isolation. The more an individual can communicate in English, the greater their potential ability to engage with others in their local community. ESOL learning can therefore provide a basic level of cultural capital, that is, the ability to at least participate in everyday interactions and perhaps overcome a key barrier to accessing other education or employment (Bloch 2002a; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). Research from Klenk (2017) and Phillimore et al. (2007) have highlighted how critical formal ESOL education can be for women's sense of belonging, independence, and self-esteem. ESOL education provides the linguistic ability to do everyday things for themselves. The counter side of the gendered limitations affecting women, particularly mothers, in attaining higher levels of ESOL certifications was highlighted in Klenk's (2017) work, as discussed above. Therefore, such literature implicitly and sometimes explicitly shows the relationship between the development of capital, education, and individual well-being and indicates intersectional challenges mothers face seeking sanctuary. However, I still find the work focused on women and mothers reductive, heavily emphasising reproductive roles and barriers.

For Wales, refugee education literature focuses almost exclusively on ESOL and/or education for employability. For example, Crawley and Crimes (2009b) conducted survey interviews of 74 questions with 123 refugees living in Wales to

investigate refugees' skills and barriers to inclusion. Their analysis suggested that the social network of support from those with a similar linguistic and cultural background is often missing for refugees in Wales. For me, this indicates that a lack of linguistic and cultural capital may hinder the building of social capital in Wales. Crawley and Crimes also found both high unemployment rates and employment (primarily low-paid) were generally not aligned to qualifications or previous experience. This finding would seem to demonstrate similar issues to those in Canada that Lamba (2003) wrote about and the challenges with capital highlighted by Cheung and Philimore (2014; 2017) in the UK. Interestingly, Crawley and Crimes (2009a) also reported that the proportion of refugees undertaking training courses was higher in Wales than in other parts of the UK, even though access to English language learning was problematic. However, the implications of those particular findings were not discussed in depth.

Chick and Hannagan-Lewis (2019) have more recently explored ESOL education in a study into understanding the barriers to education and employment for resettled Syrian refugees in Convergence areas of Wales. The researchers reported their findings from the second author's MRes[28] mixed methods research project. They collected data through 45 refugee survey respondents, 58 refugee focus group participants and 26 stakeholders interviews. They analysed the data thematically, finding that isolation was a key theme in the data.. The researchers found feelings of isolation were more pronounced when the individual's English language skills were

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[28] Master of Research, a postgraduate course which focuses on an independent research study

also fundamental. The work by Chick and Hannagan-Lewis built on earlier research exploring the role that voluntary sector support provided for voluntary migrant populations in Wales. Furlong and Hunt (2009) showed that community groups for migrants significantly improved language acquisition and critical life skills. Furlong and Hunt's research highlighted the role of English language skills for everyday independence in Wales, just as Philimore et al. (2007) did with their work in England. However, Furlong and Hunt's (2009) work on community groups contributed to the questions I asked about the role of community-based learning, which I discuss further in Section 3.3

I found some answers and more questions in the broader literature on ESOL education. I find existing literature relevant to both hooks' (2009) writing on engaged pedagogy, resistance and social change and the theories of social learning I discuss in Section 3.3. Simpson (2010) provided an exploration of ESOL classrooms in England. He discussed discursive spaces within formal lessons, presenting them as social spaces rather than marketized systems for certifications and qualifications. Klenk's (2017) 'alternative understanding of education'[29] was based on mothers feeling their achievements are lesser, despite their social or community value. I find this paper to be an essential contribution to both critiques of the marketisation of education (Hartley 1995; Ritzer 1996; Hyland and Merrill 2003) and the discussions on education as empowerment I highlighted in Section 3.2.1 (hooks 2009). Klenk's findings emphasise how learning can provide individual and community value that

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[29] This is the first part of the title of the paper

can be empowering in social and cultural terms. Her work, however, also shows evident marginalisation stemming from systems that measure value in economic terms. I will return to this point in Section 3.4. For me, such research into ESOL education is an area in which the gendered issues of the value placed on formal education over informal learning can be seen quite clearly.

Further research in England has explored language learning and the intersections of gender and race (including cultural racism and Islamophobia). For example, Thompson and Nasimi (2020) evaluated a community project run for migrant Muslim women in London. They argued that ESOL learning, practical workshops, and social integration in the same community spaces are significant models for marginalised women's empowerment, support, well-being, and social integration. More specifically to refugee women and mothers, Morrice (2007) has convincingly argued the importance of informal social learning for meeting societal and individual refugee women's needs for social integration, self-confidence, and language acquisition. Morrice uses Bourdieu's concept of social capital as an explanatory framework for her analysis and concludes that society needs a shift away from just focusing on formal education to recognise the full value of informal and social learning. Moreover, Klenk (2017) and Thompson and Nasimi (2020) show critical gendered differences in the development of linguistic capital. Their work also raises important questions about the barriers for women to transfer that linguistic capital into social and economic capital.

## 3.3 LEARNING AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

In Section 3.2, I discussed the refugee education literature that has used theories of social capital and social justice. I did so within a framework of Intersectionality, racial capitalism, and social reproduction, the concepts and theories I introduced and discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Using both social theories of education and social views of marginalisation and oppression, I had a framework to discuss the use of education systems to oppress, exclude, and marginalise those seeking sanctuary, particularly women and mothers. I then indicated why Morrice's (2007) arguments for further exploration of informal social learning seemed significant. Those arguments appeared even more convincing when I considered them within a framework of multiple-layered and hierarchical systems of intersecting dehumanisation and discrimination that I discussed in Chapter 2 (Yuval-Davis 1999; Alhayek 2014). I have demonstrated how existing social theories and empirical literature have established that formal education systems can be places of everyday bordering, exclusion, and reinforced discrimination. Despite inclusion challenges, I have also demonstrated that there is space to see education as providing opportunities for social justice or change.

In this section, I move away from the sociological concepts of education systems to theories in social psychology on learning as a social phenomenon and process. I define social learning as a social process or phenomenon of active participation through which individuals and communities develop new identities and a shared sense of belonging.  I specifically explore whether academic and social learning theories add differing layers or are a less visible but equally exclusionary

social phenomenon. I primarily refer to Wenger's (2018) social theory of learning for that discussion. I also discuss Wenger-Trayner E. and B.'s (2020) conceptualisation of social learning spaces and value creation. Of course, other scholars have written about and developed theories or concepts of social learning. I do not have the space in this thesis to discuss them. Instead, I will explain that Wenger and Wenger-Trayner E. and B.'s recent theories and conceptual definitions seem most relevant to the existing literature and my findings on refugees and social learning.

### 3.3.1  COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL LEARNING

Wenger's (2018) social theory of learning and Wenger-Trayner E. and B.'s (2020) conceptualisation of social learning spaces builds on their earlier work. I will provide a brief overview of the developments and differences in the theoretical concepts to explain my definition of social learning (see section above) and its influence on my research.  Lave and Wenger (1991)  defined a concept of 'communities of practice'. They described these communities as spaces in which social learning occurs.  Both authors emphasised a space for learning in which practitioners were present or even centred (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). However, Wenger (2018) recently developed his theories on social learning around social participation in any community, not just a practitioner one. In that sense, Wenger argued that social learning involves actively participating in community practices and constructing identities through those communities (1998; 2018). Wenger (2018) also developed a conceptual framework built on four parts: meaning — learning as experience; practice — learning as doing; community — learning as belonging; and identity — learning as becoming. For Wenger, the interaction between individuals is not, by its

very nature, a solitary activity. Therefore, ongoing interaction and engagement with others is a process of collective learning.

Wenger-Trayner E. and B. (2020) have further developed these theories of social learning and communities of practice through a further conceptualisation of 'social learning spaces'. This theoretical development included a more explicit incorporation of critical feminist standpoints and social justice approaches. They defined Social Learning Spaces as places where learning is an iterative process for developing capabilities and agency. 'Communities of Practice' are once such space, but not the only one. Wenger-Trayner E. and B. (2020) defined social learning spaces through three core participation characteristics – caring to make a difference, engaging in uncertainty/participating at the edge of their knowledge, and paying attention. I see a social learning space as one in which there is a mutual engagement in social learning, with a mutual goal of effective change through learning from each other. I therefore find Wenger-Trayner E. and B.'s theories and concepts very relevant to Klenk's work, that I discussed in Section 3.2.2. Moreover, I use the theoretical concepts for interpreting Morrice's work on refugee women and informal learning for social integration, which I will discuss further in Section 3.4

The significance for my work is that social learning spaces are places within communities where the participants in the community define the value created. That value does not have to be in economic or monetary terms. In this way, I have provided adequate space to critique the connection of all learning and community engagement to economics, as Bourdieu had done through his concepts of forms of capital and policymakers often do today.  Additional significance comes with social

reproduction theories highlighting the societal lack of value for women and mothers' unpaid labour and societal contributions, as discussed in Section 3.2.1 (Lonegran 2015; Bhattacharyya 2018; Erel 2018).

People in social learning spaces generate value through interactions, framing and evaluating the learning. However, that activity takes place in spaces and ways that do not require but do not exclude formal structures, systems, or institutions. Wenger's (2018) and Wenger-Trayner E. and B.'s (2020) conceptual framing of social learning seemed particularly relevant for evaluating the potential value in further exploring the informal, social, and community learning papers I discussed in Section 3.2. I also found the concepts appropriate for interpreting my participants' learning experiences, where they were based more in the community than in institutions. The theoretical framing of learning as community social participation (and vice versa) provided me with a framework that explicitly utilised the notions of belonging, identity, social networks, and community.

A substantial body of international refugee education literature already explores community and social learning. For example, Pittaway et al. (2016) explored community and individual capacities in their work, exploring ways refugees can access social capital and build social capacity. In the UK, Morrice (2007) has advocated for a greater understanding of the importance of informal social learning in social community spaces for refugee women. In Wales, Hunt and Furlongs's (2009) work, with case studies of specific communities in Cardiff and Llanelli, has shown how vital community-based ESOL learning can be. They found that community-based language classes taught by local volunteers can become a haven

away from a broader, hostile society.  Fejes and Dahlstadt (2020) used the concept of 'Communities of Practice' as a framework for better understanding the importance newly arrived refugees place on 'popular education' activities in Sweden. Meanwhile, Ghneim (2021) distinguished between traditional educational institutions and communities of practice, finding that refugees in the USA want and need the certificates awarded by the former, while the latter can offer a valuable path for developing social and economic support programmes. Ghneim's work reflected the distinctions authors such as Klenk (2017) had found for refugee women in the UK ESOL classes for qualifications and more informal classes (as discussed in Section 3.2.3).

However, there are critiques of Wenger's theories within empirical refugee and migrant education literature. Stevenson (2010) critiqued the 'Communities of Practice' concept in research with migrant and racialised women. Stevenson argued that such spaces of commonality within formal Higher Education institutions could be exclusionary.  Migrant and racialised women might find themselves on the periphery of such communities. Such exclusion could be disempowering for those who had previously held a position of status socially or economically (with a tertiary level of education). Stevenson's findings reflected intersectional discrimination. Stevenson's interpretation of Wenger's definition of communities presents a practical analysis and raises some questions. Stevenson shows that communities of practice within formal education institutions cannot necessarily be free from institutional or systemic discrimination, contrasting with the impact found in Ghneim's (2021) work when communities of practice were separate from the institution. The theoretical and empirical discussions on the role of learning and its impacts on refugee women and

mothers were significant for all stages of my research. They gave me an empirical justification and conceptualisation for formulating research questions on transitions, barriers, and supportive inclusion that led me to social learning when analysing my data. They encouraged me to generate data about participants' learning experiences within educational institutions and community and social spaces. The same scholarship also gave me a framework for analysing that data as social learning in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

## 3.4   INVISIBLE WOMEN AND INVISIBLE LEARNING

The body of literature on refugee education in the UK highlights some key gendered and intersectional issues. Despite this, UK refugee education literature still lacks work focusing specifically on women seeking sanctuary. Instead, their experiences tend to be grouped with those of other migrant or racialised women or with sanctuary-seeking men. Women, including mothers, are often reduced to their reproductive, caring and domestic roles with little exploration of their lives beyond these roles and their intersectional challenges. That is particularly true of the research and policy papers examining Wales, for example, Crawley and Crimes' (2009b) work on education and employment, Chick and Hannagan-Lewis' (2019) research on ESOL learning, and the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary Plan (Welsh Government 2019a). I discussed the general lack of UK literature on refugee women in Chapter 2, Section 2.3. Now, I discuss the sparsity in education literature more specifically.

A body of educational literature in the UK explores the experiences of racialised women and mothers, including those seeking sanctuary. However, there are two critical gaps in that body of work. The first is that it is almost exclusively about England. The second is that the distinct learning experiences of women and mothers seeking sanctuary sit within the broader area of migrant education literature. I discussed the first issue in Chapters 1 and 2, Sections 1.4 and 2.4, where I highlighted why I think there is a need for more research on sanctuary-seeking in Wales. Those reasons are the increasingly distinct context through devolution, diverging government policies, and a differing historic migrant population. I will now focus on the second issue through some critical relevant work on migrant and racialised women and learning.

The literature on learning for migrant or racialised women in England uses theories I have discussed in this chapter and the first two chapters of this thesis. Therefore, some key literature is relevant to my work but with significant limitations. Clarke's (2010) work on transformational learning of English in museum settings and Morrice's (2010) story of identity formation and learning narratives are based in England. Neither work focused on migrant or refugee women. Reynolds and Erel's (2016) community-focused participatory research highlights the responsibilities and social performances of migrant mothers in London, who may include those seeking sanctuary. Thompson and Nasimi's (2020) research recently explored the role of community learning in supporting the learning of cultural and social norms and women's rights, reporting positive impacts on integration and self-esteem. The authors argue that the project demonstrates the benefits of a needs-based, bottom-up approach to support and integration of migrant Muslim women.

There is empirical literature exploring the marginalisation of refugees in Higher Education in the UK that is relevant to my work but highlights issues of women's visibility. Mangan and Winters (2017) explored refugee experiences of invalidation and misrecognition in UK Higher Education. However, they group men's and women's experiences. The NIACE report on refugee and asylum seeker access to education and employment only mentions women precisely once, with "domestic caring responsibilities" (2009, p.4). These works sit within a body of literature that evidences some needs and experiences of racialised groups of women. That evidence includes marginalisation from and within formal education systems and the potential supportive role of informal social learning. Women and mothers seeking sanctuary are not entirely invisible in this body of literature, but their distinct experiences remain obscured.

A tiny body of literature explores the specific experiences of women seeking sanctuary in England. Morrice (2007) reviewed the role of informal social learning in the social integration of women refugees in England. She demonstrated that social community spaces play a vital role in providing social support and the development of new or rebuilt identities for women, particularly mothers. As mentioned elsewhere, Morrice advocated for greater recognition of informal social learning as necessary for mothers who often build their social capital through relationships with other mothers in local communities rather than in the workplace. However, Morrice argued convincingly that informal social learning is significant for refugee mothers, who are more excluded from formal education and employment than their male counterparts and women without children. Morrice highlighted how knowledge passed from more established refugees to new arrivals, arguably similar to the research on

superdiverse cities (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore 2018). While formal learning may aid economic contributions, Morrice argued that informal learning is more significant in supporting civic participation and social integration. Therefore, the neoliberal capitalist focus on education's economic functions disadvantages refugee women.

Klenk's (2017) work, which I discussed earlier in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, supports Morrice's (2007) findings. Klenk explored social integration and ESOL classes for refugee women held at a community centre in London. She highlighted the importance of a gendered perspective in understanding the structural and policy issues refugee women face in education. Klenk called for a broader notion of education in policy to better align with refugee women's skills, needs, and aspirations and to better reflect the intrinsic benefits for mothers and their children. Both Morrice and Klenk highlight the undervaluing of the role of motherhood as an agentic force for women and their children's futures. The undervaluing and invisibility of mothers' unpaid labour are issues that I see as related to broader Intersectional Feminist discussions of marginalisation and social reproduction (Bhattacharyya 2018; Erel 2018). Once again, I see evidence of reductive constructions of motherhood that are used to marginalise racialised women. These are topics that I have highlighted repeatedly in this chapter and the previous two chapters. The presence of these issues in a sparse area of the literature suggests scope for further research.

## 3.5  SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter provides a contextual overview of some fundamental theories and literature that helped contextualise my research overall. I have demonstrated where key ideas and concepts in sociology, the psychology of learning, and race and migration studies combine in the refugee education literature. Chapter 1 outlines the critical theories and concepts I use to provide my research framework. I introduced Critical Race Theory, Racial Capitalism and their relationship with my overall Intersectional Feminist framework. In Chapter 2, I demonstrated the systemic and structural oppression of the UK's asylum system, using CRT and the concepts of racial capitalism and Intersectionality. This chapter, combined with the preceding two chapters, provides the research context for the positioning of my research questions on the role of learning in experiences, the transitions, barriers, and support positioned within existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

In this chapter, I highlighted the relevance of theories from Bourdieu (1977; 1991), Fraser (1998; 2007), hooks (2009), Wenger (2018), and Wenger-Trayner E. and B. (2020). In particular, I discussed examples of scholarship. I demonstrated where theories of racial and gendered (intersectional) oppression had had an influence on or with theories on of education and learning. I referred to work by scholars such as hooks (2009), Mirza (1992), and Figueroa (1991) in that discussion. Furthermore, I demonstrated the prominence and combined application of these theories and concepts in refugee and migrant education specifically.  I referred to

international work by Stevenson (2012) on marginalisation and attainment in higher education and Klenk (2017) on ESOL provision for women.

Empirical education literature relevant to my research interests has utilised Critical or Standpoint Theories of oppression and marginalisation and broader social theories on education and learning. I discussed specific examples of literature on the concepts of Intersectionality, forms of capital, social reproduction, misrecognition, and social learning in refugee education literature. Morrice's (2007) work on informal learning and the social integration of women refugees in England was central to some of my discussion. I have included some key theoretical concepts and their application in empirical debates on forms of education and learning as systems or phenomena of marginalisation or support. I have demonstrated the relevance of those same concepts in empirical literature in the UK, focused explicitly on adult refugee education or education and learning for racialised and migrant women. For example, I discussed Thompson and Nasimi's (2020) research on community learning with Muslim women in London. In discussing applying theoretical concepts in existing literature, I have also highlighted the scarcity of literature on sanctuary-seeking women, particularly in Wales.

This chapter is the last of three that frame my research personally, contextually, theoretically and empirically. I have now demonstrated my overall line of academic inquiry, my theoretical and contextual framework, and my specific research focus on sanctuary-seeking mothers in Wales and their experiences of education as a societal system and learning as a social phenomenon.

Therefore, my research questions are as listed below (the chapter in brackets is the empirical chapter where the question is addressed directly):

1.  What role does learning play during transitional experiences for mothers living as asylum seekers and refugees in Wales? (Chapter 5)

2.  How do mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales experience and perceive the impacts of barriers to learning? (Chapter 6)

3.  Does learning play a supportive role for mothers seeking a place of sanctuary in Wales? (Chapter 7)

I have used the first three chapters of this thesis to explain the background for my development of those questions. In the next chapter, I will discuss how I explored those questions and why I chose particular methodological approaches for that exploration regarding the main points made so far.

# 4   METHODOLOGY

## 4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will discuss my methodological approach and methods for my research. I have structured this chapter as a narrative by developing my approach, design, and methods. The style and structure of this chapter are consistent with my Introduction (Chapter 1) and Discussion and Conclusions (Chapter 8), the chapters which focus most on the researcher. It is also the structure I found best supported my ability to include ethical considerations throughout and to reflect the temporal elements of my methods.

I start by outlining my methodological approach in Section 4.2.,  I provide an outline of the qualitative paradigms by which my work is informed. I briefly return to critical points on the context, theories and concepts that have influenced my research, as discussed in more depth across Chapters 1, 2, and 3. In this Chapter, Section 4.3 outlines my qualitative research design and the methods I chose for working longitudinally and across multiple sites. I also describe the change from a longitudinal project to a two-phase one and from in-person to remote data generation following the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. In Section 4.4,  I discuss recruitment, including the methodological and ethical dilemmas and solutions I faced with gatekeepers and participants. It is in this section that I introduce my participants. I then write about generating data with my participants, dialogically and creatively, in Section 4.5. Finally, in Section 4.6, I explain my approach to multimodal episodic narrative and thematic narrative data analysis and the presentation of that analysis in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

For me, ethics are not a distinct and separate part of research but are woven through everything I do as a researcher (Ellingson and Sotirin 2020; Miller et al.). Therefore, I have incorporated ethics as a topic throughout this chapter, reflecting my ethical approach and position as a researcher. I secured ethical approval for my research through the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee with reference SREC/3219. I re-confirmed that approval for the changes to generate data through remote methods due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. Approval details are available in Appendix 10.11.

## 4.2  METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

### 4.2.1  METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW AND INFLUENCES

In this section, I will discuss the theories, concepts, and empirical literature that informed my choice of methods. Then, I explore how existing literature informed my continuing consideration of my positionality. Throughout Section 4.3, I will return to my methodological approach in detail as I relate it to my specific choices of design and methods.

Critical constructionist approaches to social science research (Burr 1995; Denzin and Lincoln 2011, chap.1) provided me with a theoretical basis for prioritising personal, subjective experience. Intersectional Feminism provided a framework to develop my understanding of specific gendered and racialised experiences (Crenshaw 1989; Erel et al. 2016). According to Denzin (2001), constructionist epistemologies see knowledge developing from social and contextual processes and structures. Denzin asserts that interpretive interactionism favours exploring the relationship between personal experiences and public policies, systems, and

perceptions. As discussed in Chapter 1, Intersectionality provides an ontological and epistemological framework for research. It is a concept built on theoretical structures for developing our understanding of personal, subjective lived experiences of racialised and marginalised women (Crenshaw 1989; hooks 2000). I have used the social theories discussed throughout Chapter 3 to influence my approach, centring my participants' experiences in the broader context of the intersecting systemic and structural oppressions and discriminations addressed in Chapter 2 (Crenshaw 2011; Cisneros 2021).

There are ongoing academic discussions and debates on methodological approaches used to understand marginalised groups' experiences. These discussions in Black Feminist scholarship have formed part of the broader debates on the role of qualitative research and the importance of in-depth experiential data for understanding social phenomena. For example, Black British Feminist research by Mirza (1992), highlighted in Section 3.2.1.  Mirza demonstrated how qualitative inquiry could help develop significant knowledge and understanding of factors impacting the educational attainment of Black girls in ways quantitative inquiry cannot. More recently, Feminist and Black Feminist scholars in the UK have used creative methods to investigate experiences. Kaptani et al. (2021) wrote about participatory arts and action research methodological innovations. The authors drew on their projects with migrant mothers and families using participatory theatre (Erel et al. 2018c) and walking (O'Neill 2018). They argued that such methods could support research for social change. These arguments helped me develop my research project as one through which I could impact policy and service provision.

Throughout my PhD, I also became increasingly aware of decolonial approaches in research that questioned traditional academic structures, systems, methods, and outputs (Velez 2019; Thondhlana et al. 2020; Ruíz 2021). The decolonial influence on my work combines intersectional, representational, creative, and collaborative influences (Pickering and Kara 2017; Manning 2018). These related areas of academic debates were vital in informing my methodological approach and the design, methodological, and analytical choices that I discuss further in Sections 4.3, 4.5, and 4.6.  Black and Intersectional Feminist qualitative, collaborative, and decolonial work informed my methodological approach. Using dialogical and creative methods, I chose to take a qualitative ethnographic and collaborative approach for my research. I felt such an approach was appropriate for my overall research perspective informed by Intersectionality and Black Feminist theories.

I based my methodological approach on exploring individual subjective temporal and contextual experiences collaboratively and ethnically sensitively. A qualitative ethnographical approach that took me into participants' communities and spaces (Gobo and Marciniak 2016; Hammersley 2018) provided me with an ethical option for the comfort and well-being of my participants. Ethical consideration that sanctuary-seeking mothers are likely to have experienced trauma was a priority to me. An ethnographic approach also seemed most appropriate for the ethical and logistical considerations of generating data with mothers across Wales. I would travel to them rather than expect any participants to travel to me. Moreover, for this project, an ethnographic approach seemed more aligned with the collaborative approach I wanted to take.

My overall research perspective, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, includes the issues of the constructions of sanctuary-seeking mothers that focus on vulnerability and reproductive roles. Therefore, I wanted a collaborative approach to generating data on individual experiences. I used dialogical and creative methods to support my methodological and ethical practices. I chose qualitative interviews and creative visual methods to create verbal and visual data across multiple sites across Wales. I explain the design of my interviews further in Section 4.3.2.

I do not have the space to discuss alternative forms of creative, collaborative research that might have been suitable. However, I should say that wanting to generate data with individuals rather than groups was an essential factor in choosing not to use coproduction and participatory action methods (Malcom-Piqueux 2015; Lenette 2019). Moreover, I considered vital elements, not theoretical and empirical influences but individual practicalities. Therefore, I also considered my skills and experience as a researcher, the limited relationships I had at the start of my PhD with potential participants, and options suitable for generating data with individuals across different parts of Wales. The body of scholarship that informed my approach also influenced the considerations and choices I made concerning researcher positionality.

## 4.2.2  RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

My position as a British citizen and an 'outsider' from those seeking sanctuary gave me three core research conundrums. Firstly, I needed to decide how to gain access to displaced mothers. Secondly, I wanted to ensure I talked to them with empathy and consideration for their experiences of Home Office interviews. I return to this point again in Section 4.3.2. My concerns included the position of advantage as someone born a British Citizen but also a racialised mother, which I discuss further in Section 4.4. Ethically, these were important considerations for me as the researcher. These were specific considerations relating to a 'vulnerable' group, interwoven with more generalisable ethical considerations of power relations between researcher and participant (Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009; Van Liempt and Bilger 2012). Thirdly, I needed to consider how to represent the women and present their experiences in my thesis. Choosing how to represent the participants in my research was an important ethical decision, as discussed by Pickering and Kara (2017). Those 'how' questions became so interlinked that I will start with a point about them.  Even at the start of my PhD journey, the phrase 'hard-to-reach group' was not one with which I felt comfortable, even though it is considered an accepted term for asylum seekers and refugees (Van Liempt and Bilger 2012). I found the phrase, or question, 'how to reach' (Boag-Munroe and Evangelou 2012) felt far more ethically appropriate and had fewer overtones of coloniality.

While I remained very aware of my positions of privilege and power as a researcher and someone born with the right to British citizenship, I also knew that these were not my only identities; they are not my most visible social characteristics. My sex and gender are perceptible to others, and I am a visible, racialised minority in

Wales. My motherhood might be less obvious initially, as would the fact one of my parents was a migrant, and so I was raised in ways that straddled two cultures and two histories. From reading work by scholars such as Griffith (1998), Ryan (2015), and Keikelame (2018), I knew I could conduct my research with a conscious duality of positioning as both an insider and an outsider, relating to some of those different social characteristics.

My reading also suggested that it could be vital for me to consider my positionality with my gatekeepers. As a mixed-race researcher, positionality is very contextual, particularly related to ethnicity and race. I live categorised as 'Black' within the UK but am sometimes called 'white' by African Diasporas and in African countries, for example. I planned to visit parts of Wales where the non-white populations are so tiny that my skin colour would, in my view, be significant in ways it might not be in another context. Gatekeepers, for example, were likelier to be white and British than in places like London. The Welsh context was, therefore, important to me in my methodological planning, which I will now discuss.

The literature I have discussed above did not guide me in conducting my research as a Black-mixed-race woman in Wales. I did not have any precedents in the Welsh context to act as guides, nor did I have local researchers who understood my position. Maylor (2009) wrote about similar challenges of understanding and recognition in academia, and I could strongly identify with her experiences more than a decade after her paper was published. The most relevant recent interview-based research with sanctuary seekers in Wales was conducted by white (British) researchers (Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019; Parker 2020; Prowle 2022). Literature from other contexts could not tell me about the potential nuances of my

positionality in Wales specifically. I could not know whether my perceptions of where/when I was an insider versus an outsider would be the same for gatekeepers and participants until my fieldwork was underway. I needed to research reflexively throughout my entire project. Continual reflection was necessary to ensure that I continued to be mindful of the nuances and impact of my positionality at every stage.

My journey as a mother has taught me that motherhood, like womanhood, is a diverse experience that is sometimes unifying and sometimes divisive. I have sometimes felt like an outsider within groups of other mothers, but I also found many friends in Wales through motherhood. My experiences on that journey have made me aware that there are potentially significant differences in my experiences of motherhood from those of sanctuary-seeking mothers (Madziva and Zontini 2012; Moorhouse and Cunningham 2012). For example, I am a 'native' English speaker who has grown up with the British healthcare and education systems. I have never experienced forced separation from my children, and I am raising them in the society where I grew up in terms of legal citizenship and status, although not locality. In my early days as a mother, I found myself often mixing in primarily white-middle-class British (Welsh and English) circles. I found myself subjected to labels that reflected quite a white middle-class intellectualising of my mothering choices[30], such as breastfeeding, bedsharing and using slings. Yet, to me, my choices were simply instinctive, what seemed best for me and my baby (so not always my first choice!) and culturally normative for my Nigerian heritage. Therefore, I was acutely aware

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[30] This was phrasing I used myself to myself and my husband, influenced by a song by the band Skunk Anansie "Intellectualise My Blackness"

that my personal experience of motherhood and the gendered discourse around me

had a different socio-cultural and geographical context and points of reference from

my participants (Miller 2005a; Miller 2007). However, I hoped there might be

sufficient similarities with 'motherhood' to create an initial sense of trust through

some shared understanding, but I did not think that alone would be sufficient.

## 4.3   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

### 4.3.1   CORE DESIGN

My project evolved as a qualitative ethnographic, collaborative study using semi-structured episodic narrative interviews and image elicitation as data generation tools. I was aware that changes in immigration status (from asylum seeker to refugee) could be critical to some women's particular experiences. I designed my project to support research questions based on subjective, personal experiences of transitions, barriers, and support. My research question on transitions implies imply temporality, particularly in the asylum system where there are several transitions – e.g., being a new arrival, living as an asylum seeker, and then getting Leave to Remain.  Informed by longitudinal qualitative work by Neale (Neale 2017), I initially designed my research as a longitudinal study based on three phases of interviews with the same group of participants to try to capture temporality and changing (and unchanging) immigration statuses. I was partway through a second data creation phase when the Covid-19 pandemic started. That impacted my project design and implementation to the extent that I would not describe the final approach as distinctly longitudinal but rather a two-phase process through which I did generate some temporal data. So, perhaps my design became a hybrid one. I discuss this further when I discuss generating data in Section 4.5, specifically in Section 4.5.1.1, where I discuss the impact of the UK lockdowns starting as I was in the middle of data generation.

Although I always planned a qualitative project overall, I originally included a small quantitative element.  I started with four core research questions for the project. One question was a brief statistical assessment of the educational backgrounds of asylum-seeking and refugee women in Wales using Annual Population Survey data. I dropped this question due to the pandemic restrictions for accessing the Office of National Statistics.  I had intended for the question to provide a contextual framing assessment, providing additional information to the contextual discussion found in Chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis and some of my findings. It was not essential for the other three questions on transitions, exclusions/barriers, and support and inclusion. Nor was that original framing question necessary for a participant-centred and collaborative qualitative project.

Overall, I generated data with 26 mothers who had sought or were seeking sanctuary in Wales at the time of our first interviews. My complete dataset contains 30 interview transcripts, 24 drawings and eight sets of photographs, all compiled over approximately 20 months. I further developed digital stories from that dataset iteratively and with participants.

### 4.3.2  PARTICIPATION, COLLABORATION AND CREATIVITY

I used Intersectional and Black Feminism to inform my research design and my choice to focus on the experiences and perspectives of a marginalised group of mothers. Therefore, I designed my project to help me focus on participants' representations of their experiences and critical factors involved in their marginalisation concerning education and learning.  My research questions (page 6)

focus on the role of education and learning in transitioning through life as a mother seeking sanctuary, the impacts of barriers to accessing education, and the supportive and inclusive community benefits of learning.  I will discuss each of the project's design elements in more depth.

My research involves an ethnographic approach but is not an ethnography project. The ethnographic element came from the direct relationships I developed within settings where my participants regularly spent time rather than through times and spaces specified just for my research. As a methodology, feminist or otherwise, ethnography does not have a single definition. Still, I would summarise it as studying people through direct relationships in naturally occurring settings, typically with observations as the core study tool (Gobo and Marciniak 2016). Criticism of traditional ethnographies is that they involve a 'white gaze' and perpetuate colonialist and imperialistic research approaches, with a researcher observing a social group as an outsider, with a conscious or unconscious bias of their cultural superiority (Bolles 2013; Makhulu and Smith 2022). However, defenders of ethnographic approaches highlight the ethical importance and research benefits of ensuring participants are comfortable and safe in the environment in which their participation happens. Critical ethnographers such as Lassiter (Lassiter 2005) and Madison (2011) have argued that reflexive, ethical ethnographic research should be conducted with a sense of duty and responsibility that emphasises collaboration throughout the process. Black Feminist ethnographers demonstrated the benefits of working ethnographically as someone who shares participants' experiences (Hill Collins 1986; Johnson 2017). Scholars have distinguished traditional anthropological outsider observation from feminist and decolonial approaches. The latter tend to include more dialectic,

dialogical methods, such as qualitative interviews and reflexive researcher positioning (Manning 2018; Cisneros 2021). What some Feminist ethnographic researchers have in common is focusing on women's experiences and feminist theoretical lenses to explore gendered oppression and differences.

The decoloniality influences my work in much of Black Feminism and Intersectional work and the desire to focus on women's lived experiences and perspectives. As such, I felt that ethnography was unsuitable for me as an outsider or newcomer to some spaces. I was self-aware enough to know that my interpretations would depend too much on my assumptions and biases to centre my participants and their perspectives. More significantly, as I was researching mothers as a mother, I wanted clear boundaries. I wanted to ensure I had limitations for my data and the children who would be present in the spaces where I did my fieldwork (Verhallen 2016). I wanted an approach that would enable me to generate data ethically, with the comfort and well-being of my participants and their children as my priority. I also wanted to have ethical boundaries for myself and my children, as I spent time in some of the sites as a mother and member of the community, not as a researcher (Brown Mose and Masi de Casanova Erynn 2019).

Moreover, I needed methods that would support my research questions in that they centred my participants' individual stories and perspectives (Cisneros 2021) of transitions, barriers, and support/inclusion. While ethnography was not suitable for me, I believed that ethnographic, dialectic and dialogical narrative generation could provide me with an appropriate approach (Neale 2017). Individual interviews are a commonly used tool for such an approach. I was also mindful that any data from a traditional interview would still heavily depend on my questions – and whether I was

asking the right ones. There is a specific context surrounding the word 'interview' for anyone who has been through the asylum system - interrogations with the Home Office or Department of Work and Pension Officials (or journalists). For asylum-seeking women, interviews with the Home Office could have involved the traumatic experience of having to disclose details of sexual violence or domestic abuse to a man, a potentially hostile and suspicious man. Research on such experiences has shown that women in such interviews were likely to disassociate during them and scored highly on measures of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)  (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Reehal et al. 2019)**.** Consequently, interviews in the UK were something asylum-seeking women might view very negatively and associate with trauma.

I believed that to follow an ethical approach based on feminist methodologies that centre my participants' experiences and my positionality, I needed to re-consider the notion of research interviews. I did not want the word 'interview' to be associated, due to past experiences, with my gatekeepers or participants with traumatic interrogations. Therefore, I planned interviews that would take place as focused conversations between two mothers. I wanted the discussions to be relaxed in comfortable and familiar environments between two (or more) mothers but with a specific purpose: my research.

With such ethical considerations, as described above, I chose my methods for data generation. I decided on strategies that could offer and support each participant's active and participatory role while also considering my participants' ethics of consent and comfort. I designed the interviews to encourage as much talk from my participants as possible. I, the researcher, chose the scope and overall

focus of the interviews for each phase, so they were semi-structured interviews in a longitudinal project (Neale 2017). I also asked open questions designed to enable my participants to take the conversation in directions they chose within that scope, so they could also be considered episodic narrative interviews (Mueller 2019). I return to the nature of my interviews again in Section 4.3.4. Additionally, image elicitation – first drawings and then photographs – gave participants some choice in the medium of the data generated and control, with the visuals, over what they chose to represent in their images. Later in the project, I collaboratively combined the verbal and visual data with some participants, which I discuss further in Section 4.5.4.

Feminist researchers and race and migration sociologists are increasingly using participatory and collaborative methods, as recently discussed by Gervais et al. (2018), as one way to give participants more significant input into data generation. Those methods sometimes involve arts-based approaches involving photographs, poems, and drawings. Examples of such approaches include Back and Shina's (2018) work with migrants in London and O'Neills' (2018) use of images with racialised mothers. Some participatory and collaborative scholars also explicitly consider the role or impact of research sites, even where they do not position their work as ethnographic. For example, Erel et al. (2018b) briefly explain their research reasons for using a theatre (using performance art workshops with migrant mothers). They explicitly considered the experiences of self-reflection and interactions with others for both the method and the site chosen. Erel et al. cite Kaptani and Yuval-Davis' (2008) earlier work with refugees, emphasising the role that theatre can play in providing a "meaningful connection" to both places and people. In such work, the

researchers invited participants into a specific space for the researchers' activities (theatre performance). In other work, the researchers choose sites where participants already spend time. For example, Thompson's (2018) work with Muslim mothers in London was situated where women attended community groups and English classes. Researchers choose their research sites carefully based on their participants, approach, and aims.

Existing literature informed me that a feminist collaborative methodological approach was appropriate for my research. I consider my approach to be collaborative and participatory for the following reasons. My interviews and chosen creative methods provided my participants to lead the direction of the communication within the scope I defined. I offered the option for two forms of communication to give the women a choice in mode of expression and an opportunity for addressing potential language barriers. As discussed in Section 4.5, I have maintained contact with as many of my participants as possible, returning to them to generate data and findings in visual and digital stories.

Moreover, I am (usually virtually) returning to the communities and sites I visited to engage and share my findings, using those visual and digital stories I discuss in Chapter 8, Section 8.4 (Impact or Research for Change). I tend to emphasise my research's collaborative rather than participatory nature for two reasons. Firstly, the differing levels of engagement resulting from choices participants made, the impact of a researcher-led design and analytical choices (see Section 4.6) and the impact of the pandemic affecting modes of engagement. Secondly, the significance of collaboration from gatekeepers during recruitment (see Section 4.4.2) and for engagement with and dissemination of my findings (see

Chapter 8, as mentioned above). However, I sought active participant-centred engagement, for which the term participatory also feels appropriate. Ultimately, my primary aim throughout was to centre my participants as much as possible whilst still acknowledging the researcher-led nature of the project.

My research seeks to explore the standpoints of asylum-seeking and refugee mothers within an immigration environment that is proven to be hostile and oppressive. I wanted to generate data with them, and ethically, I tried to do so in spaces where my participants felt comfortable and supported. I also wanted to use tools for generating data suitable for the verbal barriers involved with a multilingual participant group. I, therefore, chose to go into refugee community spaces, doing ethnographic fieldwork to generate longitudinal qualitative interviews, verbal and visual, data with my participants. Such an approach was an appropriate way to collaboratively explore mothers' temporal experiences that may include traumatic histories, ensuring ethical consideration for their well-being and reflecting on my position as a researcher.

### 4.3.3  QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

I would describe my interviews as 'semi-structured, episodic, narrative interviews' as the most accurate conceptual description to reflect the distinct and equally important elements of my research interviews. They were semi-structured interviews because I designed them to explore experiences in the context of a defined agenda and scope set by me as the researcher. I was influenced by Miller's (2005a) and Neale's (2017) definitions of their qualitative interviews as semi-structured in their longitudinal studies. However, I also centred my participants, and I had a minimal number (four)

of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to respond in a narrative form. (Slembrouck 2012). Most specifically, these could be seen as episodic narrative interviews, as defined and discussed by Mueller (2019), as I initially planned to generate temporal stories built from three distinct phases of interviews [31].  The concept of episodic narrative interviews is consistent with the episodic narrative analysis framework I discuss in Section 4.6.3.

### 4.3.3.1 VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Research interviews involve talking (obviously), which requires the use of language. The participants in such conversations need to speak a shared language well enough to understand each other or have a third-party present who speaks the language of each well enough to translate/interpret. There is nothing unusual about this in research; it is a vital part of dialectical and dialogical-based research (Roulston and Choi 2011). There is a complexity in research with migrants and refugees when the languages of potential participants are unknown. Ensuring that two people, the researcher and participant, can communicate with each other cannot wait until the attempts to converse have started. Plans are needed to ensure that potential research participants understand sufficient information about the project to provide their consent as informed as possible. Strategies are also required to ensure the research conversation can occur ethically (Bhattacharya 2007; Duncombe and Jessop 2012).

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[31] As discussed in Sections 6.3.1and 6.5.1.1, I was not able to follow these plans to due the Covid-19 pandemic,

Therefore, language was a vital consideration for my research. I am only fluent in English. Consequently, I started this PhD fully aware that I had some ethical and verbal decisions to make. While many asylum seekers and refugees in the U.K. speak fluent or excellent English, many do not. This heterogeneous group has a vast range of first languages. I scoured the literature to see how other researchers conducted qualitative interviews with a verbally diverse pool of potential and actual participants. Some choose to have participants from one specific country of origin only or involve one primary language only. That has been particularly the case in recent years in the UK with a focus on Syrian refugees, for example, Tweed (2018) and, in Wales, Chick and Hannagan-Lewis (2019).   Specific methods have also been developed for multilingual and intercultural communication contexts (Reynolds 2018).  These methods typically involve interpreters accepting the potential issues of changed or lost meaning (Temple 2002). Other researchers chose a monolingual approach and conducted all interviews in English, assuming this would exclude the participation and experiences of those who do not speak good conversational English. Two recent doctoral researchers working with sanctuary seekers in Wales chose a monolingual approach (Parker 2020) and (Iqbal 2016). There is no consensus on a 'correct' way (quite rightly), but none of those choices really felt right for me and my work, as I will now explain.

I knew I did not want to rely on interpreters, as introducing a third party would affect the dynamic between each participant and me and the rapport I wanted to have (I discuss this topic in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.5.1). However, I did not feel comfortable requiring participants to express themselves in a language they may not speak fluently. I was concerned I would exclude participants who spoke 'beginners'

English or lacked confidence in communicating in English, and I did not want to do that either. I felt I would be more able to build rapport and trust and have a mother-to-mother conversation without a third-party present and reliance on an interpreter. I used to teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), so I felt reasonably confident in my skills to communicate with women whose English was less than fluent. However, I also wanted to offer another form of communication to my participants, i.e., visual communication, in case they felt they could not make their points well enough in English. I thought it would also be an interesting analytical point to explore whether the mode of communication made any difference to the content of that communication. When considering my options for data generation, I could not find a researcher in the UK who had directly and explicitly used creative methods to address linguistic barriers with refugee or migrant adults in one-to-one interviews ethically. No recent precedent in Wales might help me predict how the idea might be received by my potential participant population and their gatekeepers. However, I found a large body of literature on creative methods relevant and helpful.

### 4.3.3.2 CREATIVE COMMUNICATION

I started reading more literature on participant communication during interviews and encouraging interviewees to talk. Through reading work by authors such as Rose (2016) and Mannay (2014; 2016), I could see how generating visual and creative data could be the right option for me. I also felt such methods might solve my verbal issues in these conversations. I also knew, however, that I would be working across multiple locations and in some spaces with children present.  I also needed to consider how creative methods might aid my research in that context. I looked at existing work with refugees and migrants to see if there were any valuable

precedents for me. When I first looked, I came across arts-based projects, such as Caroline Lennette's in Australia (Lenette 2019) and Maggie O'Neill's work with racialised mothers (2018). I later read Erel and Reynold's (2018c) participatory action and affective research with migrant mothers in London and Vacchelli's (2018) accounts of collage and digital story making. Such work gave me an academic precedent of creative feminist methodologies within migration and refugee studies.

I chose drawings as the most suitable form of visual data to elicit during interviews (Mannay 2014). I felt that drawings were a creative practice suitable for individual communication (whereas some methods, such as performance arts, might be more appropriate for groups) (Lyon 2020). Pictures are a universally recognised form of art and communication, so I hoped the method would require minimal explanation (consistent with my consideration for language barriers) (Lyon 2020). Vachelli (2018) gave me a recent example of image elicitation with migrant and sanctuary-seeking women. She worked through focus groups rather than interviews and found collages helpful as a creative method for communication in research. I liked the embodied nature of collages but wanted a creative method that would be simple to explain and that mothers could do rapidly, if necessary.

Drawings can be done quickly and simply, or they can be detailed pictures on which the creator has spent significant time, giving my participants flexibility and choices dependent on their available time and their sense of comfort with the choice of medium. For me, carrying a bag with pens, pencils, small craft items, and a pad of paper was a suitable option when travelling across. I needed to develop my research design and methods within my specific geographical context, with consideration for my participants and myself. I could not expect other relevant methodological

approaches to be replicable. I, therefore, used existing literature to inform and inspire my choices. I decided to enable the women I met to generate visual data as an alternative to language and words. I chose image generation and elicitation (drawings and photographs) for ethical, methodological and practical reasons. I talk about the reasons for photo elicitation further in Section 4.5.3

## 4.3.3.3 ETHICAL AND PLANNED SELF-CARE AS A RESEARCHER

Ethical consideration for myself, not just my participants, was essential throughout this project. To re-use and re-phrase Lorde's (1984a) words on self-care, I knew that ethical care for myself could be an act of self-preservation. My research conversations included histories of sexual violence, domestic abuse, state-sponsored torture, and more. While I generally found most of my interviews did not seem as challenging for me as they were happening, I knew that I should not ignore the emotional labour involved. There was a risk that the compounded effect of hearing several stories of trauma could result in secondary emotional trauma or stress for me (Whitt-Woosley and Sprang 2018). I felt that the risk of a compounding effect of emotional toil was perhaps greater on a longitudinal project where I would be prolonging my data generation over at least a year and potentially building closer relationships with my participants than on a cross-sectional project. Furthermore, as a Black-mixed race mother and researcher, I was perhaps particularly aware of the emotional and psychological toil of conducting potentially socially transformative research with racialised mothers (Scott 2016).

My ethical considerations for my project needed to include planned care for myself and my participants. Part of that ethical care was ensuring that my interviews

were not all conducted in a tiny window and that I had support. In addition to spacing out my interviews, I proactively organised sessions with the student support counselling service to have a confidential space to talk with a trained professional. I also actively sought to find or create a space where I could interact with other researchers, academics, and activists with whom I could share an understanding of Lorde's (1984a) description of self-care. Those acts of ethical care for myself were in addition to supervisory support and my existing network of family and friends.

## 4.3.4 MULTI-SITE INTERVIEWS

Research with asylum seekers, refugees and migrant women is often limited to a single site or a limited geographical area. Thompson and Nasimi (2020) worked with Muslim women at a single place of activities in London, Erel and Reynolds (2018) worked with a group of mothers in a specific theatre space, while Madziva and Zontini (2012) worked with Zimbabwean mothers in London. Research in Wales is often limited to geographical areas such as Cardiff or South Wales (Iqbal 2016; Parker 2020), with the largest concentration of dispersed asylum seekers or the Convergence [32] areas hosting Syrian refugees (Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019).  I wanted to look at the Welsh context, considering the four dispersal areas of Wales and at least one place that was part of the Syrian Resettlement Programme. My goal was to see whether there were any differences in women's experiences in differing areas and routes to refugee status. I was not looking to be able to generalise about differences but capture the diversity of experiences; I hoped to gather some temporal and geographical data in women's narratives.

The locations for my data generation were several geographical areas, differing from other refugee research in Wales, and potentially involved multiple sites within each region. Multiple groups run on different sites and spaces in Cardiff, Swansea, and Newport. I felt it was an appropriate methodological decision to try to conduct my recruitment and interviews in an ethnographic way within refugee

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[32] Specific areas of Wales that received EU funding due to levels of socio-economic deprivation. These are discussed more in Chapter 1

groups, most specifically women's groups. These sites would be places where my

participants already spent time and, hopefully, felt comfortable and safe. Hopefully,

they would be spaces where I could meet and interview the same woman more than

once with consideration for her comfort, well-being, and logistical ease. They were

groups to which I already knew my womanhood, motherhood, and racialisation

granted me entry. I knew I might need to visit several groups to research where my

participants felt most comfortable, in 'natural social settings' (Bolles 2013; Manning

2018).

**I visited 12 sites – groups and individuals' homes – across 5 locations and used WhatsApp and Zoom as two different virtual sites during the pandemic lockdowns. I conducted most interviews on a one-to-one basis, although some were with two or three women together, as their choice. Often there would be numerous (five to thirty) other women in the vicinity, usually in the same room. I offered each mother who participated in a community space the option to speak more privately, but only one wanted to do that. I also provided of the option of interviews in a location of a woman's choosing, resulting in six interviews in women's homes and places of work. The multi-site approach resulted in interviews conducted in different environments, from over a meal in a quiet, private home to a large and noisy hall in a craft and activity session for women and children. The locations of my fieldwork sites are in the table below, based on the two-phase design I adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The table demonstrates the geographical breadth I covered, differing from recent that continued research focus on specific areas such as South Wales (Parker 2020; Prowle 2022) or Convergence areas (Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). I have not specified how many places I visited in each area during Phase 1 to help maintain participants' anonymity.Table 1 - Interview Sites**

| Location | Site Types | Number of Participants | 1st encounter with 1st interview [33] |
|----------|-----------|------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Phase 1 | | | |
| Cardiff | Community groups/activities | 7 | 0 |
| Swansea | Community Groups/Activities | 7 | 2 |

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[33] This column reflects the number of participants in that location who I met for the first time on the same day as I interviewed them. I met or spoke with 14 of my interview participants on a date prior to the first interview and 12 of them I first met on the day I interviewed them

| | Homes | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Workplace | | |
| Newport | Community Groups/Activities | 3 | 3 |
| | Homes | | |
| Wrexham | Community Group/Activity | 3 | 3 |
| Mid-Wales[34] | ESOL Class | 4 | 4 |
| **Phase 2** | | | |
| Virtual | Zoom | 3 | 0 |
| | WhatsApp | 8 | 0 |

I entered sanctuary-seeking mothers' spaces as a mother/woman participating in the activities, a researcher observing and interviewing. I kept clear boundaries, only generating data from interviews or virtual messages (see Section 4.5). However, I made notes after site visits as a researcher to contextualise my data and interpretations. I decided to position my research interviews as one-to-one 'mother-to-mother' (research) conversations. From my perspective, I accepted the rigour of a qualitative interview. I knew that most (but not all) forms of qualitative research involve generating data through interviewing or talking with participants, be they interviews conducted alongside or as part of ethnographic observations or performance-based participatory research as examples (Roulston and Choi 2011). However, I planned my interviews with consideration of the women I hoped would be my participants, as I discussed in Section 4.3.2.

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[34] To maintain some level of anonymity for my participants, I have not named the location in Wales as numbers of refugees living outside the dispersal areas at the time of my research were so small that revealing the location could be identifying.

My experiences as a racialised mother meant I knew I could enter and participate in spaces for refugee women in ways that a man, or even a white woman, could not.  My desire to conduct interviews that felt like relaxed conversations involved careful, ethical and conceptual planning, design and execution. I discuss the execution further in Section 4.3.5, particularly the relationship between myself, my participants, and the research environments. I focus on the design and planning in the rest of this section.

## 4.3.5  PILOT INTERVIEWS AND CREATIVE RESEARCH CONVERSATIONS

I conducted two pilot dialogical interviews. I deliberately chose not to speak to sanctuary-seeking mothers for the pilots but to conduct 'trial' interviews that focused on other vital elements/characteristics. I planned to run a third (maybe a fourth) pilot interview with a sanctuary-seeking mother if I needed to combine factors I kept separate in the initial pilot interviews. Giving myself that option reflected my highly reflexive approach throughout the project. Ethically, however, I wanted consent for those first interviews with sanctuary-seeking mothers to be included in my dataset if they went well, which they did. The one significant ethical and logistical gap in my pilot interviews was that I conducted the interviews without any children present, which would not be so practical on field sites. (See Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 )

My first pilot interview was with Tamara[35] , a voluntary migrant mother. Tamara had only been in Wales for a few months and was not confident with her (excellent to me) English language skills. I deliberately conducted this pilot as a more 'typical' semi-structured interview, where I tried to achieve some warmth and rapport with a connection through motherhood. The interview with Tamara went reasonably well, but I felt I could have built more of a rapport and gained more depth in our conversation. Additionally, I felt that my ideas of using drawings/creative methods could have added an extra dimension and depth – giving her the option to depict visually things that might be tricky for her to express in English. When I talked to Tamara after the interview, she agreed.

My second pilot interview was with Gabby, a Welsh mother who had experienced various forms of trauma and gender-based violence throughout her life. For this interview, I tried to shift away from the question-and-answer session and towards a dialogue that was more akin to a more relaxed mother-to-mother conversation, more of a narrative interview, with some creativity added.  I wanted to try this approach without the concerns of language barriers, a decision based on my perceptions of my competencies and weaknesses going into the pilots. Gabby and I talked for over an hour. Her feedback was that chatting as two mothers together was "perfect". She explained she found the interview so much better than anything she had previously experienced as a research participant.

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[35] The names of my pilot interviewees are pseudonyms, as they are for all participants.

I asked Gabby to create an image as I drew the research conversation to a close. She was very enthusiastic about this idea and gave me feedback that the drawing at the end meant she felt comfortable with it and had more ideas than she would have had at the start.  I asked Gabby to talk me through the drawing, this time trialling an approach that would affect my analysis of images.  I wanted to analyse the visual data primarily from the creator's/participant's perspective, not mine, as the viewer, which I discuss further in Section 4.6.2.

I learnt a lot from the pilots. I knew that being in a setting in which the woman felt comfortable and starting our dialogue with our common ground (motherhood) helped create a natural rapport without the risk I was manipulating or 'faking friendship' (Duncombe and Jessop 2012). My focused conversational approach prompted open answers that would generate data relevant to my research questions on transitions, barriers, and support From Gabby, I learnt that a simple image from an individual participant could convey a powerful message that encapsulated and supplemented verbal data. Asking Gabby to be creative towards the end of our conversation worked well as it incorporated and related this creative element into the dialogue of an interview.

## 4.4   RECRUITMENT

### 4.4.1  WORKING WITH GATEKEEPERS

The involvement of gatekeepers was vital for this project. However, as Crowhurst and Kennedy-Macfoy (2013) have identified, in-depth methodological writing concerning gatekeepers is scarce in existing social research literature.  Therefore, I sometimes had to make leaps of faith in my relationships with gatekeepers, filling the gaps in existing literature for myself as I worked. With these organisations and individuals, my researcher positionality would become overtly significant. I had a few contacts with individuals or organisations within the NGO sector who worked with sanctuary seekers. The connections that I had were also limited both geographically, all Cardiff, and in numbers. Through existing contacts and gatekeepers, I planned and achieved some purposive and snowball recruitment (Miller 2015; Keikelame 2018). I needed an appropriate methodological approach for working with gatekeepers in such a way.

The limited existing literature does provide a clear case for ensuring robust and appropriate ethical considerations are given to relationships with gatekeepers. Singh and Wassener (2016) have argued that building relationships with gatekeepers needs to be contextualised within the ethical obligations of conscientious research and informed consent. In educational research, Homan (Homan 2001) has set out a clear case for applying the principle of informed consent to gatekeepers and participants. I decided to work with written information sheets differentiated for participants and gatekeepers to ensure that the information provided was most appropriate for the audience(s) and reduced the risk of assumed

consent (Homan 2001). I also gained ethical approval for running focus groups with gatekeeping organisations, intending to inform and gain support. Ultimately, however, the focus groups were unnecessary as I quickly got direct permission from gatekeepers.

It quickly became apparent that my researcher positionality conscious presentation of academic interviews as 'mother-to-mother conversations' played a critical role in gaining access from gatekeepers. One of my first contacts with a potential gatekeeper[36] taught me a valuable lesson on the impact that positioning myself as a 'mother researching mothers' would make on my work. She initially did not want me to recruit from her group, refusing as soon as a mutual acquaintance introduced me. When the conversation moved on from my research, I spoke about bringing my toddler to the playgroup session as a mother with her child. At that point, she returned to the topic of my research and recruiting participants, but now with enthusiastic consent.  She asked me about my approach and listened to my response. I did not make that group a field site or recruit women directly from that group. I did return, however, as a mother with her child, and I must acknowledge that this helped to develop relationships with mothers that I saw at other groups or centres. I included this encounter with a gatekeeper as it taught me a valuable lesson. I learnt that being explicit about my positionality and approach would open doors to me that might be closed by a more traditional/ conservative approach or a total outsider.

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[36] Fieldnotes May 2019

Gaining acceptance with gatekeepers could not guarantee acceptance with sanctuary-seeking mothers, but it did help. As my recruitment progressed, it became more apparent that my status as a racialised woman, my plan to hold 'mother-to-mother conversations', and my sincere passion for my topic, were opening doors. In an email from one gatekeeper to a group of others, I was described as enthusiastic and positive who would make women feel comfortable. Those other individuals responded positively and invited me to their women's groups.[37] As with the first parent and toddler group I described above, I could participate in these groups as a woman, a mother, and a Black-mixed-race, one at that. I had more than one experience as a gatekeeper, assuming I was there to join the group/activity purely as a participant when I first arrived. Each time that happened, the gatekeeper expressed my ability to blend into the space positively.[38]  I was not necessarily an insider but nor was I an outsider.

Overall, not being typical of someone from the ivory tower of academia operated in my favour in the field – highlighting the need for greater diversity of researchers and the importance of visible representation (Maylor 2009).  I could access mothers in their everyday social settings and activities, and they did not appear out of place. I could work in ways that, for example, white, middle-class men would not have been able to do. I could operate in ways that the almost exclusively white social science researchers in Cardiff would not have been able to do. In Section 4.4.2 that follows, I discuss further navigating fieldwork sites and the

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[37] Field Notes July 2019
[38] Field notes September 2019

significance of doing so as a Black-mixed-race mother. I return to the significance of participant feedback for my research and as a researcher in Chapter 8 (Sections 8.1.2 and 8.5.1).

Griffiths (1998) and Keikelame (2018) discuss the fluidity of researcher positionality throughout the lifetime of a project. My positionality changed throughout the project as I got to know gatekeepers more. The gatekeepers no longer saw a woman who would 'fit in' with their service users; I also became a partial insider with those gatekeepers. I have been invited into their forums, meetings, and coalitions. Most of the gatekeepers with whom I have developed relationships were white, British women. The predominance of women partly reflects the fact that my fieldwork was in women's groups, but also that the workforce in the sector is primarily women. I have, therefore become another British woman working hard for sanctuary seekers. I did not need to negotiate further with gatekeepers once the first phase of my project was complete, but I have maintained relationships with them. Methodologically, I considered my position and approach with gatekeepers as seriously as I did with participants (Homan 2001; Crowhurst and Kennedy-Macfoy 2013; Singh and Wassenaar 2016). In doing so, I eased my path to accessing participants and developed working relationships with gatekeeping organisations and individuals.

## 4.4.2  RECRUITING MOTHERS

It became increasingly clear that Boag-Munroe and Evangelou  (2012) made the distinction between 'hard-to-reach' and 'how-to-reach' was significant in my project. The relationship between the gatekeeper and participant was why some mothers agreed to be involved in my study. So sometimes, the 'how' I recruited women was based on my positionality with the gatekeeper more than the participant. That, in turn, affected my positionality with displaced women – my skin colour and visible womanhood did not automatically make me seem a trustworthy 'insider' to potential participants. Still, I was accepted because someone they trusted had introduced us. My multi-sited approach meant that I naturally phased recruitment as it was logistically easier to manage for the places I could only visit specifically for my research.  I returned to four of my five locations at least twice.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns curtailed my time in the field, which I return to in Section 4.5.1.1. The table below shows the timeline of my recruitment and retention.

**Table 2 - Interview Timeline**

| Area | First visits | Second visits | Remote Photo Elicitation |
|------|-------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Cardiff | May – July 2019 | January -March 2020 | May-July 2020 |
| Newport | May – July 2019 | January – March 2020 | May-July 2020 |
| Swansea | September – November 2019 | January - March 2020 | May-July 2020 |
| Wrexham | September 2019 | March 2020 | May-July 2020 |

| Mid-Wales | December 2019 | N/A | May-July 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Remote Interviews | May 2020 – April 2021 | | |

I recruited participants in every place I decided to visit except for the playgroup I mentioned in Section 4.4.1. Participants also invited me to different locations/groups. My visible positionality was how I reached a few participants initially. However, I was only in spaces as a researcher (not only a racialised mother) where gatekeepers had granted me access. I provided further detail on the characteristics of my participants in Section 4.5.5.1, where I explained some of the ethical decisions I had to make concerning anonymisation. I could only make those decisions after completing the data generation phases.

My positionality with participants was nuanced. I had no control over some parts of my positionality, but I consciously tried to emphasise others. I am a visible Black-mixed-race woman. That aspect of positionality was evident regardless of what I chose to do. As discussed above in Section 4.4.1, my visible social characteristics meant that I did not seem out of place, visually, in the refugee women's groups or wider community support groups I visited for fieldwork.

I made my motherhood more visible to potential participants in two important ways. Firstly, I visited some local groups with my children so they could join in with the activities as part of our regular family life. Secondly, I introduced myself as a mother in locations I only visited as a researcher. In those spaces, I started my research conversations with small talk about my children and showed photos of them on my phone (I did this with my children's knowledge and consent). My reason was to help the women relax and feel comfortable with me, to build that initial rapport and trust using some common ground. The approaches worked very well, starting with

laughter over shared experiences, women taking out their phones to show me their photos, calling over their children and other behaviours that I interpreted positively. Ethically, I maintained clear boundaries concerning data generation: transcription and analysis started with my first planned interview question. I discuss the ethics of the interview process in more detail in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.5.1.

I recruited most of my participants by talking directly in a group. In all but two sites, I was introduced generally and then left to mingle and chat with mothers, and I recruited them through my conversations. At one place, women approached me, asking to be involved after I was introduced. Two or three participants also introduced me to their friends.  In one case, a refugee who was not eligible to participate introduced me to a mother. On several occasions, these conversations suggested that my visibility as a racialised woman and a mother were significant factors. During my fieldwork, participants and other sanctuary seekers told me what a positive impact it was for them to see a racialised woman doing this research. Overall, navigating refugee support communities as a racialised woman and mother was critical in 'how' I recruited sanctuary-seeking mothers and why I did not find them hard to reach. As with gatekeepers, my recruitment of participants (and ongoing relationships with them and the broader communities) highlighted the positive significance of my position as a Black-mixed-race Mother. In turn, the importance of diversity and representation in research was evident (Maylor 2009; Boag-Munroe and Evangelou 2012);  who is doing the research matters, not just how.

## 4.4.2.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Ethical approval often requires written consent forms as evidence of informed consent (Roulston and Choi 2011). I was told by peers and academics that my School's ethics committee generally conformed to that position, although not always. I did not test the integrity of this information, but there were issues with relying on written consent for my research. A signature on a piece of paper does not genuinely prove that someone has understood what was written down, something critical to consider with people who do not speak English as a first language. A single signature on a form does not reflect the ongoing and iterative process in a longitudinal, participatory, or collaborative project. Informed consent is more nuanced than signed forms.

For the same reasons that I did not want to conduct my interviews through interpreters, I did not want to rely on a single signature on a piece of paper to ensure women understood. Instead, I emphasised verbal consent as an established alternative or addition to written consent forms (Temple 2002). (Although a colleague did translate my consent forms into standardised Arabic when I recruited several Arabic speakers). I knew that trust and rapport were essential and that I needed to ensure a power imbalance did not result in coerced consent (Van Liempt and Bilger 2012). I verbally discussed the written consent form at the start of the first interview with each mother and answered any questions. In gaining verbal consent, I could adjust my language to maximise understanding and ensure valid informed consent (Van Liempt and Bilger 2012). I also assessed the participants' verbal ability for the interview itself. Thankfully, I did not have to exclude anyone due to their limited English language skills. Three women chose to have interpretation support

from a friend/family member (which helped me confirm consent verbally), and the use of creative methods provided an adequate additional form of communication as planned.

At the end of each interview, I would reiterate the information and ask again whether they were willing to have the conversation included in my project and whether they were still happy to meet with me again for more interviews. Only then did I consider I had initial consent from each mother for the longitudinal element of the project (Neale 2017). I re-confirmed that continued consent when contacting the mothers for the second interview or remote participation, as discussed in Section 4.5.1.1.

I recruited just one participant with whom I felt the participant-researcher power imbalance (Van Liempt and Bilger 2012) had shifted too far in my 'favour'. She was desperate for information on a specific topic[39] , and as we talked, I increasingly felt that was the only reason she had agreed to speak with me. So, I gently and subtly drew the interview to a premature close and agreed to send the woman the information she desperately wanted. I confirmed whether she was happy for me to use what she had told me, but I did not reiterate consent for future interviews and did not pursue her involvement in the second phase. This experience was, fortunately, the exception. I was able to continue with all other interviews comfortably.

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[39] I have chosen not to reveal more about the nature of this information for ethical reasons related to my reasons for not including her interview as data.

## 4.5 GENERATING DATA - CREATIVE DIALOGUE

### 4.5.1 GENERAL INTERVIEW PROCESS

In my original plans, I was going to conduct three phases of interviews, as described in Section 4.3.1. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that I did not conduct three interviews with any of the women and conducted second interviews with six of my initial 24 participants. (I interviewed, virtually, two new participants recruited after the start of the pandemic – see Section 4.5.3, 'Generating Data During a Pandemic'). Interviews ranged from 60 minutes to 2.5 hours, including the time for the creative data elements. As discussed in Sections 4.3 and 4.4, I positioned my interviews with gatekeepers and participants as mother-to-mother conversations with a research focus. I intended to have the rigour of a research interview. Still, I was very aware I needed to communicate that in a non-academic way with my gatekeepers and potential participants. I mainly wanted to avoid the potentially unhelpful and loaded associations that the world 'interview' might hold for sanctuary seekers and gatekeepers. I made those considerations for my interview design in communications with gatekeepers and participants.

I, therefore, had a very short interview schedule for the project's first phase. I had just five core question areas, asking about each participant's life in Wales, experiences of learning, and hopes for the future. The questions were open-ended, and I did not have precise wording as I adjusted the words and phrasing for each

participant and interview[40]. My questions for the second[41] interview phase were also

few. I individualised them for each participant to invite my participants to reflect on

our previous interview, what had changed for them in the intervening period and

further thoughts on their futures.

I wanted to ensure that the questions I asked would flow in a conversation-like

manner, far removed from interrogative interviews participants may have

experienced. As previously discussed (Sections 4.3.3 4.4), I made ethical

considerations for both the risk of re-traumatising participants (Murphy and Vieten

2016; Lenette 2019) and the importance of making participants feel comfortable and

building a rapport (Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009; Miller 2015). However, I did not want to

manipulate women into participation by faking potential friendship, a risk highlighted

clearly by Duncombe and Jessop (2012). Furthermore, I did not want to blur the

boundaries of consent and data generation, which was a risk when interviewing

mothers in their familiar community spaces where I may have become a participant

or visitor (Verhallen 2016).

While I deliberately emphasised my motherhood, I kept my visits with my

children and my visits to conduct interviews distinct and separate. I initially

considered collecting observational data from field sites but decided not to partly

because, ethically and logistically, I did not want to combine fieldwork and my

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[40] The five question prompts can be found in the Appendix 10.6

[41] I only conducted six second interviews in person and was not able to conduct any third interviews due to the pandemic. I stopped interviewing as ethically remote interviews with my participants did not seem appropriate. I moved to remote photo elicitation. After the initial lockdown in the UK, I interviewed two new participants remotely and was able conduct a seventh second interview, also remotely. I discuss these changes further in Section 4.5.3

mothering care work that way (Drozdzewski and Robinson 2015; Brown Mose and Masi de Casanova Erynn 2019). Therefore, I kept my data generation bound to the interviews. During interviews, I tried to ensure participants had my full attention and to avoid a situation where they could only participate with the risk of my children overhearing the interviews. I excluded any possibility of my children being by-standers to interviews out of ethical consideration for my children (immediate risk of emotional harm) and my participants (their sense of comfort being open with me). I included my motherhood in my self-introductions/re-introductions but also introduced myself clearly as a researcher and clarified the purpose of each research interview.

Additionally, I planned my interviews to ensure that I verbally secured and confirmed consent (as well as using written consent forms). I kept the introductory small talk and the sharing of photos relatively brief (mainly as sometimes I was working with time constraints). I would gently steer the mother back to my research and confirm she wished to continue talking with me about my research. I turned my recording devices on when I confirmed consent as I only considered our conversations 'data' from that moment onwards. I reconfirmed consent before I asked my first question from my (loosely structured) interview schedule – doing this with as smooth a transition as possible. That transition also helped me feel that I was not faking friendship (Duncombe and Jessop 2012), as it reminded each mother I was a researcher, not just a mum chatting. The transition and reconfirmation of consent also allowed the mother and I to ensure that her child/ren did not become part of the immediate data generation process (Verhallen 2016). During the interview, the mother could decide whether to keep her children/ren close by or have another woman care for them. For those who kept their child close by, through

choice or necessity, we had time to ensure that the child was occupied with toys or art supplies.

The first question I asked was for each woman to tell me more about herself and her life in Wales, which followed well from the introductory dialogue. Generally, I found the conversation would move back and forth between the subject of mothers' learning and shared experiences quite seamlessly. For example, Aamira, Hasifa, and I laughed and joked about fathering versus mothering in between more serious moments. Dansitu and I started comparing our children's homework and discussing Harry Potter. A good rapport (Van Liempt and Bilger 2012) through relaxed conversations was essential to generating rich, in-depth data and maintaining ongoing relationships. I used my remaining interview questions to ensure the interview stayed within the scope and focus of my research aims. I would ask them at a point that either seemed to naturally follow from something a mother had said or to bring a moment of digression back to the focus I needed. I primarily used my questions as a guide to ensure I did not forget to cover a key area (life now, learning experiences, the future). That approach helped me centre the data generation process on each participant and the narratives she shared within the scope of my research. I needed to prompt and ask more follow-up questions for some women than others. I expected such differences with interviews tailored for each participant and positioned within a bounded scope (Willig and Stainton-Rogers 2011; Plankey-Videla 2012).

My first phase of interviews went well; I spoke with twenty-four mothers across five different parts of Wales, sixteen of whom created or started a picture. That phase took about six months to complete, partly because I needed to ensure

sufficient gaps between interviews for the manual labour of transcription and the emotional toll of listening to stories of trauma (see Section 4.3.3.3). However, the duration was also for the logistical reasons of recruitment and scheduling – with my final four interviews taking place after a gap of two-and-a-half months because December was the best month to visit and meet a particular area and group.

I chose to transcribe my interviews myself. I did this closely following each interview so that the conversation was fresh in my mind. I could include details of interruptions, my observations of body language etc., in the transcriptions[42]. Those embodied details felt important when transcribing conversations with women who did not speak English as a first or primary language and so often used gestures and movements to help convey their point to me (Leigh, Jennifer; Brown 2021). I use ellipses to reflect short pauses in the transcription of the extracts in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. I use the symbols [ ] to record longer pauses, interruptions, or data that I have redacted to maintain the participant's anonymity. (See Section 4.5.5 for my decisions on ethical anonymisation.)

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[42] In my transcriptions, I included small notes on body language, interruptions, and other affective points that seemed relevant or appropriate. I included these from fieldnotes taken during the interview or memory. So, I tried to transcribe all interviews as soon as possible. I used these notes to aid my analysis process but removed them from any extracts included so that my participants words could be centred on the page.

## 4.5.1.1 RETAINING MOTHERS

My first research question focused on the exploration of the temporality of perspectives and experiences. As discussed in Section 4.3.1, I initially chose a longitudinal qualitative design with three phases to generate temporal data. That design choice would require ongoing relationships rather than a potentially fleeting one for single interviews. I hoped that lasting relationships would increase rapport and trust, increasing the story's substance (Gomes Pessoa et al. 2019). Tina Miller (2015) eloquently described her experience of longitudinal work with mothers as almost like 'stalking'. However, she also emphasises the importance of sensitivity and boundaries when maintaining contact to re-confirm consent and arrange second (and third) interviews.

Asylum seekers and refugees are a highly mobile population, as highlighted by the challenges researchers have faced when trying to evidence and trace what happens to asylum seekers in Wales once they get refugee status (Crawley 2014). The Home Office often moves people during the asylum process, and the need to find accommodation within 28 days of being granted Leave to Remain would mean that my participants might move on. I could not become a stalker; I just needed to behave a little like one (Miller 2015). I provide more information on maintaining contact in Appendix 10.9.

Maintaining relationships could not guarantee that women would interview me again. When I started asking whether women would meet with me again for my research, I got a range of responses. I kept track of what these were, as qualitative longitudinal researchers such as Miller (2015) recommended. I respected every 'no'

and tried not to ask more than twice for women who were non-committal.  I generally

needed to pre-arrange times to ensure a specific woman was at the group when I

visited (or vice versa). Unsurprisingly, those women with whom I had formed the

most solid bonds/rapport were those with whom I could schedule second interviews

first. (They are also women with whom I still have contact).

## 4.5.2  CREATIVE FIELDWORK

As discussed in Section 4.3, my overall design and approach included creative

methods. I asked each mother to create an image for me at the end of each

interview.  When I spoke to two (or more) participants together, I still asked them to

do individual drawings. I asked women to create a drawing or picture representing

our discussed experiences. I provided them with materials for creating a line drawing

and/or a crafted image with simple items such as stick-on gems. As mentioned in

Section 4.3, I aimed to provide the women with an alternative to words as a mode of

expression. Arguably, I also offered a more embodied and collaborative approach

due to the physical nature of the method (Vacchelli 2018). Most of my participants

agreed to do this - 18 of 24 women I spoke with face to face created something. Two

women explicitly chose not to create an image. The other four ran out of time (school

runs!). The issue with time was a risk I took by asking the women to draw at the end

of the interview. However, I still believe that the matter of time was outweighed by

the benefits of participants feeling more comfortable with me and the interview,

particularly as I had thought I would get three opportunities for creative

communication with my participants, too. Although the pandemic changed my plans,

I still think it was the right decision.

Visual research scholars such as Mannay (2014) and Lemon (2006) emphasise incorporating image elicitation into the interview process as essential. In participant-centred research, creative or visual methods should be part of generating data through self-expression. Incorporating creative techniques with verbal communication helps the researcher see the participants' meaning in the visual data as the creators. I discuss this approach further in Section 4.6, where I write about my analytical approach.  Mannay's (2018) and Rose's (2001) work discuss the term 'auteur theory', an art-based approach for interpreting creative outputs.  Guided by the concept of auteur theory and my collaborative approach, I asked each participant to talk briefly about their drawing to me once they had completed it. The brief discussing of the image concluded the interview.  I discuss auteur theory further in Sections 4.6.2 to 4.6.4 when describing my data analysis process.

Eighteen participants created an image in those first interviews. Some women did a swift, simple drawing (for example, Nala and Pam), while others made something more detailed and complex visually (for example, Irene). But communication of a critical message was effective either way. Only one woman seemed to create something just for the sake of it – she put stickers on a page and then could not tell me what it represented. I spoke with six women twice, and all six did two drawings. Therefore, I could not conduct second in-person interviews with more than six women due to the Covid-19 pandemic. (I discuss the pandemic's impact further in Section 4.5.1). However, I found that the six I met twice created a second image and seemed even more comfortable with me ,the interview and the creative processes than when we first met.  Existing literature suggests their

increased comfort was because we had had time to build rapport, and they knew more about what to expect (Miller 2015).

I found that asking women to create drawings or simple artwork worked well, if not always as I had hoped or expected. Additionally, this method had practical benefits for me, as I mentioned in Section 4.3.3.2. I was able to carry the materials with me quickly. The materials were also relatively inexpensive to buy. While I try my best to centre my participants in my research, I must look after myself and work logistically and ethically sustainably. Furthermore, existing literature that guided my decision to use this approach informed me that most people are familiar with drawing, regardless of background or ability (Cohn 2016).

I needed to make further ethical, practical and logistical considerations regarding my creative methods, as highlighted in Sections 4.3.2 and 4.4.2. I was researching mothers' social spaces, including their children – and non-participants' children. I ensured clear boundaries to ensure that the data generated and analysed was only with those who had consented, guided by literature on ethics in ethnographic research (Willig and Stainton-Rogers 2011; Plankey-Videla 2012; Verhallen 2016). Drawing and simple image-making worked well in this context. Mothers could draw quickly in a small or busy space. The women were usually restricted by time due to the schedule of the group in which we met, the need to do school runs or the duration of their child/ren's patience.

Furthermore, children could join in and create an image simultaneously with their mothers. Therefore, children join in with us separately, without interrupting or drawing their mothers' attention away from her creation. Sometimes, I would also

create simultaneously or chatter with a child about their image while mum drew. The children loved that they made something and got to keep it. Some children and mothers insisted that I photograph their picture, too. While I did not include these images as data, they formed parts of my fieldnotes. Image 1 below shows an image created by a group of children. This way of including children (but not as research participants themselves) complemented my mother-to-mother and partial insider approach, as the drawing activity included the mothering dynamic and was not just about a woman answering my questions and providing me with information. My inclusive approach proved essential for rapport and relationships, which are vital in any qualitative project but with a particular edge in longitudinal research when the connection needs to sustain a relationship beyond a single hour-long relationship. (Miller 2015; Neale 2017)

**Image 1 - Visual Fieldnotes**



(This image is from my fieldnotes for September 2019)

My choice of drawings as a method also provided me with one way to thank my participants for their time and for occupying their children while we talked. I

included mini colouring books and sticker books as thank-you gifts. I brought biscuits or paid for a cup of coffee as a gesture of thanks to women who were not with young children. It was essential to acknowledge that a mother was hosting me (literally or figuratively) and giving me something important – time and insight into her life. Payment, even with vouchers, was not an option I felt was suitable ethically as it could potentially be problematic legally with asylum seekers, theoretically. I did not feel equipped to navigate that aspect of the law at such an early stage in my career. But I could still offer some form of acknowledgement and thanks, which was important ethically in terms of power-imbalances and my positionality (Kvale 2007; Mannay 2016a).

At some field sites, my creative presence extended beyond the mother and her family to the entire group. That extension of my creative engagement reflected my positionality as a participant in those spaces, not just a researcher, and it is essential to acknowledge. My creative methods became a way in which I was indeed an insider in those spaces. Image 2 below is from my September 2019 field notes (not data for analysis) on a day I interviewed in such a setting. It shows the messy reality of qualitative fieldwork, being a mum, mother and toddler groups, and creative research.

**Image 2: Fieldwork with mothers and children**

I originally had a flexible plan to incorporate photographs into the third phase of interviews to add dimension to the data. I planned to retain drawings as an option as part of the interviews, but I wanted to further my collaborative approach with photo-elicitation for object-based storytelling (Emmison and Smith 2011; Woodward 2023). Sadly, the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK lockdown in March 2020 meant I did not complete my second phase. I had to make some significant adjustments to my research design and plans.

### 4.5.3 GENERATING DATA DURING A PANDEMIC

I adjusted my longitudinal design to be a (hybrid) project with two phases, reflecting the before and during periods of the Covid-19 pandemic. This change was due to the distinct differences in the data I could generate during lockdowns. The data for my new first phase were everything generated in person before the March 2020 lockdown. The data for my newly planned second phase was all generated remotely.

I was not comfortable, ethically, with remote interviews at that time. Ensuring my participants felt as safe and surrounded by support as possible had been a key ethical reason for my ethnographic approach (Lassiter 2005; Madison 2011; Skeggs

2012), as discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3. Therefore, conducting remote interviews early in a global pandemic with participants who had experienced trauma and were potentially isolated at home did not seem ethical. I decided to emphasise visual data more while retaining the option of remote interviews when that felt appropriate.

I had already considered photo-elicitation for object-based interviews, as stated in Section 4.5.2 above. Therefore, I requested and gained ethical approval to incorporate remote photo elicitation into my new second phase. Using WhatsApp text messages, I asked participants to send me a description of each photograph and/or a reason why they had chosen it. I continued to prioritise active participant input and interpretation with data generation. I contacted existing participants, focusing first on the six who had done two interviews, and asked for photographs. Most of the photographs that participants sent me were of people. I anonymised the pictures in the collaborative, ethical ways discussed in Section 4.5.5.

In contrast to my initial plans (see above – Section 4.5.2), I did not conduct an interview focusing on the photographs. Literature on photo-elicitation recommends that photographs be only used as a focal point for group activities or individual interviews (Mannay 2014; Rose 2016; de Jager et al. 2017). I, therefore, felt I was taking a risk by eliciting photographs without an accompanying interview. However, photo-elicitation was one of many methods I used across the project. The photographs were to give me a richer dataset, not my only data (Kara 2015).

Furthermore, I planned to create digital stories with participants, initially inspired by Austen's (2018) work, as I discuss next in Section 4.5.4. She has written

about creating digital stories with participants as an alternative to interviews, reassuring me that I did not need interviews for all dataset components. I still chose to elicit the photographs with an accompanying narrative from my participants, in line with my participant-centred approach (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Mannay 2014). The accompanying words would also help develop the storyboards and digital stories.

I received sets of photographs from eight participants. I also conducted three remote interviews - one with an existing participant and two with new participants. All three chose to talk and not do anything creative. The remote data generation showed some of the starkest differences between my verbal and visual data across my project. The oral data from the remote interviews reflected far more negative experiences than the visual data from the remote photo-elicitation. I return to this point a little in Section 4.6. I also briefly return to this point again when I introduce the presentation of my findings in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

### 4.5.4 MULTI-MODAL STORIES

The final piece of data generation work I did was to collaboratively create draft visual and digital stories with each mother whose individual level I might include in my narrative section. I first learnt about digital storytelling in research from a workshop by Liz Austen at the Bristol School of Education. Austen (2018) discusses using digital story creation as an alternative to interviews, which I did not want to do. However, I saw options for generating narrative data collaboratively in formats I could use to analyse and disseminate findings with non-academic audiences.

I initially created 2D visual storyboards based on key panels or episodes, as Neil Cohn ( 2013) described as one core format. I used the two interview-based drawings and then two photographs for the panels. I then added a key word that I felt summarised each image or episode it represented, based on the description or explanation the woman had given me and her whole story. I then created digital versions of each story using Adobe Spark. I used the same images as in the storyboards, but this time, I recorded an edited version of the mother's description/explanation for each of the four panels. To maintain anonymity, I recorded each mother's words using my voice. Editing words was necessary because, typically, digital stories are 2-5 minute audio-visuals (Alexandra 2008; Georgakopoulou 2012; Austen et al. 2018), and I needed to stay within the timing restrictions of the software. That need for editing made the collaboration with each mother vital to me.

I created visual story boards and digital stories using data already generated. I then worked with mothers for the editing of both formats. This process involved my labour and their approval rather than the joint effort I had envisioned before the pandemic. I explained the concept and my decisions to each woman. Interestingly, every mother confirmed that she was happy with the idea and the initial story; none of the women requested editing. However, this was an iterative and reflexive process, not a linear one. As I wrote, I altered or changed storyboards and digital stories for various analytical or editorial reasons. I sent the version I hoped would be the final for 'approval'. At that stage, I also asked if each woman would be happy for me to produce different versions, if required, to disseminate in other formats, such as journal articles or presentations or in digital stories that combined women's data and

experiences.  They all agreed. That was a choice I made to minimise the demands of my participants, which was particularly important to me in the context of a global crisis. Yet, I engaged with them sufficiently to ensure I had not veered down the wrong path in the content or presentation of their lived experiences. Ethically, I knew they were content with my representations of their lives  (Pickering and Kara 2017; Austen et al. 2018).

### 4.5.5  REPRESENTATION BUT ANONYMISATION?

At the start of my project, I was guided by a standard ethical approach in the social sciences for new researchers (Flick 2014) and a strong tradition in research with 'vulnerable' migrants (Van Liempt and Bilger 2012) that requires anonymity. Therefore, the informed consent process involved promises of anonymity and confidentiality. However, I was aware that there is a growing academic argument against anonymisation, particularly in decolonial, participatory and collaborative work, as is shown by Back and Sinha naming participants as co-authors in their book '*Migrant City'* (Back and Sinha 2018). As I progressed with my fieldwork, I found that some women did not particularly want to be anonymous while others did. Some even requested that their names be included, for example, by writing them on their drawing. I found myself uncomfortable making decisions for my participants, which felt infantilising as taking power and autonomy from my participants. However, I agreed with the conclusions of Back and Sinha (2018) and researchers such as Esin and Lounasmaa (2020) that sometimes it is not ethical for a researcher to take risks with their personal safety or legal cases.

I decided that there were some participants for whom being named would be too ethically problematic, regardless of their wishes, due to the risks to their legal cases or the potential personal impact on their broader situations. Like Back and Sinha (2018) and Esin and Lounasmaa (2020), I did not think it was safe to name some women who said I could identify them. Unlike those scholars, I treated my participants the same way for confidentiality. I decided to do this to help ensure anonymity for those who needed or/and wanted it, as Wales is a small geographical context. I did not want to draw attention and questions about identity by treating participants differently. As I will explain below, I could not take the risk that a lack of uniformity in my approach could make some of the women identifiable.

I decided to keep all my participants anonymous and took steps to do so. Those steps were more complex than simply using pseudonyms (Van Liempt and Bilger 2012). The number of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales is relatively small. In a population of 3.25 million, approximately 3,200 asylum seekers are supported at any one time, about 0.01% of the population (Home Office 2020). Focusing on mothers makes that number even smaller. My focus on education, learning, and motherhood already gave me a set of characteristics/social categories about each woman that was not generic to asylum seekers and refugees. I would include a little information about her educational background, the ages/stages of her children, and whether she was mothering in person or transnationally. When I combined that information with other details, there would be the risk of making participants identifiable.

I, therefore, made some critical ethical decisions concerning anonymisation: I do not name countries of origin anywhere in the thesis or published work; instead, I

use general geographical regions. I include the areas of Wales in which I worked but do not include the location in which any individual woman lives; I give broad fields of work, but I do not specify exact professions or jobs; I do not provide the ages of any of the women's children, but I may indicate an age range; at times I may vary the pseudonym for a woman in different parts of the thesis.

A key consideration in the ethics of confidentiality and anonymity was the photographs elicited. I had pictures from eight different women: six had included photos of themselves, and two had included pictures of their whole family unit. I was aware of the issues of anonymising photographs, as articulated by Mannay ( 2014). There was the potential of losing an element of core parts of data by only including photographs that did not expose the individuals in them. The alternative would be to include the photographs but blur or pixelate them, which can be dehumanising. I felt that neither excluding the actual photographs nor pixelating faces were options that were appropriate for my representational and de/post-colonial approach.

I, therefore, trialled different options in photo-editing software to find a solution. I tried effects that would not dehumanise and complement the hand drawings the women had created. I then entered another collaborative part of my project. Once I had completed my initial analysis, I selected the photographs I was most likely to include in this thesis (or related papers) and sent the respective edited photographs to each mother for her feedback and suggestions. Every woman was happy with the results, with just one asking for further tweaking to her photographs until she felt entirely comfortable that she was not recognisable.

However, despite these measures, women may still be identifiable to gatekeepers involved in the research. I ensured that I explained this to each woman when getting consent for participation. The ethics of anonymisation for this research have affected my ability to represent my participants and their autonomy. It, therefore, became imperative to me, as an Intersectional Feminist researcher, that the presentation of my data analysis was as collaborative and representative as possible.

## 4.5.5.1 PARTICIPANTS

This section gives an overview of the main relevant characteristics of my participants as a group. I provide more details about individuals in my analysis chapters. As stated in section 4.5.1, interviews ranged from 60 minutes to two-and-a-half hours, including the time for the creative data elements.

**Table 3 - Individual Participants**

| Pseudonym | Interviews | Drawings | Photos27F [43] | Children | Status at 1st interview | Chapter(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aaila | 1 | 1 | N | 2 | Asylum Seeker | 7 |
| Aamira + Hasifa | 2 +1 | 2+1 | Y | 1+1 | Leave to Remain (both) | 7 |
| Dansitu | 2 | 2 | Y | 2 | Leave to Remain | 5 |
| Gabina + Webet | 1+1 | 1 + N | N | 4+1 | Asylum seeker + Asylum seeker | 6 |
| Ira | 1 | N | N | 4 | Asylum seeker | 6 |
| Irene | 2 | 2 | Y | 2 | Asylum seeker | 5 |
| Keshi +Kali | 1+1 | N | N | 2+1 | Asylum seekers | NA |
| Lucia | 1 | 1 | N | 2 | Asylum seeker | 5 |

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[43] I have not included the precise number of photos for each participant, but they range from 3 to 8

| Marilyn | 2 | 2 | N | 2 | Asylum seeker | 6 & 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mona | 2 | 2 | Y | 1 | Asylum seeker | 6 |
| Muna + Yadira + Zola | 1+1+1 | 1+1+1 | N+Y+N | 3+4+3 | All Leave to Remain | 7 |
| Munira | 1 | N | N | 1 | Leave to Remain | 6 |
| Nala | 1 | N | N | 3 | Leave to Remain | 6 |
| Nanu | 1 | 1 | N | 2 | Asylum Seeker | NA |
| Olena | 1 | N | N | 2 | Asylum Seeker | 6 & 7 |
| Pam | 2 | 2 | Y | 2 | Asylum Seeker | 5 |
| Peng | 1 | N | N | 1 | Leave to Remain | 7 |
| Sarah | 2 | 2 | Y | 2 | Leave to Remain | 5 & 6 |
| Sanni | 0 | N | Y | 2 | Asylum Seeker | 6 |
| Tanni | 1 | Y | N | 2 | Leave to Remain | NA |
| Yvonne | 1 | 1 | N | 1 | Asylum Seeker | 6 |

## Table 4 - Summary Characteristics

| Regions of Origin | Numbers |
|---|---|
| Africa | 9 |
| Middle East | 7 |
| South and East Asia | 6 |
| Europe | 2 |
| Latin America | 2 |

| Highest Education Level pre-asylum claim [44] | Numbers |
|---|---|
| Not completed primary education | 1 |
| Completed Primary education | 0 |
| Completed Secondary education | 6 |
| The equivalent of FE/Vocational Qualification [45] | 10 |
| The equivalent of HE/Degree | 9 |

[44] I have used the terms primary and secondary education as defined by my participants. Those definitions did not differ from UK schooling years for those individuals. The precise years for these levels of school varies from country to country and as I have excluded country specific details, I cannot give further specifics on schooling years.
[45] This includes qualifications for professions that require diplomas in other countries but degrees in the UK

## 4.6  DATA ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

In this section, I discuss the transitions from data generation to writing the empirical chapters in this thesis. I started by explaining how I managed the data and prepared it for analysis. Then, I outline my frameworks for episodic narrative and thematic narrative analysis.  I follow those short sections with brief discussions of my analysis using those frameworks. I have structured those final two sections to reflect the structure of the analysis. Therefore, Section 4.6.3 discusses the episodic narrative analysis I present in Chapter 5, and Section 4.6.4 discusses the thematic narrative analysis I show across Chapters 6 and 7.

### 4.6.1  MANAGING DATA

My data management considerations included how to store the data securely and systematically. I stored all data securely on the university server in a specific project folder I created, in line with my university's requirements. I created secure folders for each phase of my project and each participant within each phase. From there, I systematically approached manual transcription, anonymisation and editing (images), and further data generation and storage (digital stories). I created a linked project in Nvivo for coding and analysis. I provide details of this area of my work in Appendix 10.10 (Managing Data).

## 4.6.2  ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

My analysis formed part of my collaborative and participant-centred approach. Also, I continued to follow my overall Black and Intersectional Feminist approach to centre and amplify my participants' voices and standpoints about their multi-layered experiences (Crenshaw 1989; Grasswick 2021). Therefore, I contextualise my analysis with the interactions between the researcher (me) and participants and the broader structural and systemic context of seeking sanctuary in Wales.

Furthermore, my intersectional approach includes influences from decolonial research (Asher 2017; Abdulrahman et al. 2021; Rhee 2021) that also emphasise the importance of collaboration and being as representative of participants as possible within the boundaries of academic frameworks. The ethics of representation (Pickering and Kara 2017) were critical in how I analysed and presented data in this thesis. I, therefore, structure Chapters 5, 6, and 7 to reflect the collaboration between me, the researcher, and my participants. I have written the findings in this thesis in ways that represent my participants' contributions in the stages of data generation that also led directly into parts of the analysis.  I have tried to present Chapters 5-7 in ways that represent the findings, as they are understood by participants and their communities, to ensure I have maintained my collaborative, participant-centred (non-extractive) approach at every project stage.

I wanted to centre the message a woman wanted to make. To do so, I used an analytical approach based on auteur theory, which I mentioned earlier in Section 4.5.2.  Auteur theory focuses on the creator's intended communication and expression (Rose 2016). It is a theory initially developed in the arts, specifically

French film-making (Jacobs 2022). According to auteur theory, the artistic creator is the 'auteur', the authority on their creation, with their voice showing in their work. That voice should be central and credited in any analysis of the creative product. Mannay discusses the application of auteur theory in her empirical writing (2013) and methods-focused work (2016), showing how academic researchers can apply the approach to data analysis in social research. Scholars have also discussed the theory in arts research to avoid colonialistic interpretations with cultural tropes. Onikoyi (2016), for example, argued auteur theory could help ensure analysis provides an apt and authentic expression of Yobura filmmakers' culture and cultural context. Therefore, an analytical approach based on auteur theory is consistent with my collaborative and participant-centred approach and Intersectional Feminist framework. For the visual data, I used the mother's accompanying verbal (drawings) or written (photos) description as the basis for my analysis. However, I do not try to make myself invisible as the researcher. I discuss developing, writing, and presenting my analysis in the rest of this Section and the following two Sections (4.6.3 and 4.6.4). Overall, I analysed my data both inductively, in a participant-centred manner, and deductively, with a focus on my research aims.

I chose to take a multimodal approach to my analysis, treating the visual and verbal data as equal but different modes of data (Jewitt 2015). I analysed the images and interviewed data together (multimodally), influenced by Braun and Clarke's (Braun and Clarke 2006) systematic approach for coding thematic content analysis. The coding, therefore, involved several iterative steps for each data phase. Initially, I went through each interview and created codes that seemed to encapsulate or represent each key topic or point the participant made. I then iteratively refined the

coding based on commonalities across the data and my overall research focus. I found some differences in the verbal and visual data content. Those differences perhaps reflected two important things. Firstly, a human tendency to capture or create positive images when another person asks (Mannay 2014). Secondly, the images were a snapshot of a key experience or viewpoint rather than peaks and flows of significance that came in the talk data and conversations. I, therefore, used the drawings as a guide for finding a focal point for my analysis, but not at the expense of the findings I generated through the verbal data.

As an Intersectional Feminist researcher, my aim to be participant-centred is critical to my thesis. Therefore, my data presentation reflects careful ethical thought and consideration to ensure it reflects my overall approach (Pickering and Kara 2017). One way I have achieved my goal is to include visual and digital stories in my findings Chapters. I centred my narrative analysis in Chapter 5 around those episodic story formats. I present the thematic analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 differently from Chapter 5, but I open both chapters with a visual and digital story. I agreed upon those formats for sharing findings and representing my participants with those with whom I maintained sufficient contact. They reflect and express how I disseminate and engage with non-academic audiences, particularly refugee communities. I include the visual and digital elements in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 to ensure that the representative presentation was incorporated into a format otherwise conforming to academic requirements. Ethically, I needed to represent the participants and their engagement with the project directly to the academic individuals who would read the work.

As my coding and analysis developed, I refined my research questions, resulting in three  analysis chapters, with one chapter  per question:

1. What role does learning play during transitional experiences for mothers living as asylum seekers and refugees in Wales? (Chapter 5)

2. How do mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales experience and perceive the impacts of barriers to learning? (Chapter 6)

3. Does learning play a supportive role for mothers seeking a place of sanctuary in Wales? (Chapter 7)

### 4.6.3  EPISODIC NARRATIVE ANALYSIS & REPRESENTATION

My first research question contains a temporal element more relevant to individual stories than group themes:

"What role does learning play during transitional experiences for mothers living as asylum seekers and refugees in Wales? (Chapter 5)"

I explored this question in Chapter 5, using multimodal, episodic narrative analysis as my chosen approach. I used Mueller's definition of episodic narrative, as given in Section 1.7. Mueller applied his definition of exploring experiential social concepts through the storytelling definition of episodic narrative to a form of interviewing. I consider the episodic element temporal through my longitudinal approach with three core moments, or episodes, of data generation with some participants. In my analysis, I take an episodic approach through storytelling in the short, focused phenomenon and temporal-based sections, or episodes, that primarily (but note solely) reflect the moments of data generation. That approach provided a

framework for discussing temporality and individual experiences of change and representing my participants' communication of their stories. These chapters also try to present the heterogeneity of the women in my participant group and the individual differences in experiences, which were often related to getting Leave to Remain and refugee status versus asylum seekers.

Narrative analysis is a term that has multiple, broad interpretations. My initial guiding scholarship on narrative research is the work by Andrews et al. (2008), combined with the work by Neale that I used as a foundation for my longitudinal approach (Neale 2017). In line with Black and Postcolonial Feminist narrative methodologies (Johnson 2017), my analysis involved conscious consideration of sociocultural contexts (Squire 2013).

Thanks to the retention of six mothers for my study, including the post-Covid-19 period, I could continue with my plan to present temporal narratives. In Chapter 5, I have included four stories, with data generated and created across two interviews and remote photo-elicitation. I have represented these narratives through three core episodes. For example, I discuss Irene's narrative of being a new arrival, getting refugee status and coping during lockdowns. These were chosen partly for practical reasons, based on the changes I had to make and the impact on retention due to the pandemic. However, I also selected those particular narratives for more analytical and epistemological reasons; their stories represented the key themes and shared experiences explored in the preceding chapters and the heterogeneity of a group socially constructed solely by legal processes and status.

I structured the women's stories as episodic narratives based on three key images. These are two interview drawings and a single photograph of a lockdown experience. I used these to create visual storyboards and digital stories with each of the four women. I then used the panelled and digital stories to explore the deeper and more detailed (audio-recorded and transcribed) conversations that accompanied or preceded the images. I focused on the visual materials as focal points. They represented critical moments as focused snapshots in time. I reflected on those snapshots in my analysis and presentation in this thesis. I included verbal data from the interviews in the analysis I presented. The amount of verbal data with the visual reflects my communication with the participant. For example, Irene spoke little English, so her direct communication with me was mainly through her drawings. I analysed each episode for each narrative, guided by the approaches of Andrews et al. (2008) and Squire ( for presenting my exploration and discussion. In keeping with narrative traditions, my analysis includes an introductory and concluding section and the main parts (three episodes).

## 4.6.4  THEMATIC NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis will focus on research questions two and three:

questions:

2.  How do mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales experience and perceive the
    impacts of barriers to learning? (Chapter 6)
3.  Does learning play and supportive role for mothers seeking a place of
    sanctuary in Wales? (Chapter 7)

I structured my thematic analysis so that each chapter focused on a specific

question and type of experience. Chapter 6 focuses on the well-being impacts of

misrecognition and misinformation. Chapter 7 concentrates on the theme of learning

as a form of sanctuary.  The themes for these two Chapters reflect some of the key

shared experiences I perceived in my participants' lives.

I based my analytical process on the systematic inductive approach Braun &

Clarke (2006) suggested. I iteratively coded and analysed the conversational data –

both verbal and visual (drawings), based on the overall scope of my project and then

with a greater focus on my research questions on transitions, barriers, and support. I

generated several themes and then analysed those further based on both the

content of my data and the focus of existing literature. My goal was to create final

themes that reflected topics my participants had attached importance and gaps in

existing scholarship. I did not start with any pre-determined areas in mind beyond the

focus on learning and education. When writing the thematic analysis of this thesis, I

selected the data that best represented each sub-theme or point, whether verbal or

visual. The result is that I primarily used verbal extracts in the chapter about the

more negative experiences of misrecognition with more visual materials used in the writings about the positive benefits of learning. That difference reflects the differing balance of the content of the data modes overall and concerning those themes. I have tried to be consistent in the presentation of my findings and my representational approach. Therefore, the introduction and overview of the thematic chapters also include graphic panels and digital stories that represent and illustrate the key findings I discuss.

## 4.7  Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed and explained my methodological approach for my PhD project. My approach is ethnographic and collaborative, based on and influenced by creative and participatory approaches, particularly those used in Black and Intersectional Feminist scholarship, such as (Erel et al. 2018c; O'Neill 2018). A collaborative methodological approach is consistent with my overall theoretical framework informed by Intersectional Feminism. Working ethnographically, collaboratively, and creatively to generate multimodal data from qualitative interviews gave me methods to centre my participants' perspectives and experiences. I used my methods to develop a critical understanding of mothers' individual experiences. I sought to create, with my participants, research that shows how they navigate life in Wales within the constructs of a racialised, gendered, and hostile asylum system.

In the next Chapter 5, I present a multimodal episodic analysis of four 'Narratives of Transitions, Learning, and Resilience'. In Chapters 6 and 7, I present multimodal thematic narrative analysis on 'Misrecognition, Misinformation, and Well-being' and 'Learning as a form of Sanctuary as narrative themes.

# 5   NARRATIVES OF TRANSITIONS, LEARNING, AND RESILIENCE

*"They need to give funding these little projects. They look little, but they are lifesavers for some people."* Sarah

## 5.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I address my research question:

*What role does learning play during transitional experiences for mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales?*

To address that question, I explore four narratives - the stories of Sarah, Irene, Pam and Dansitu. Sarah is a single mother with discretionary Leave to Remain who claimed asylum after leaving her abusive spouse. I present her narrative with episodes of transitions I have interpreted as family detention, an open prison, and resilient motherhood. Irene is a refugee who lives in Wales with her husband and children. I present her narrative primarily through her visual data, with transitions named using her own words: 'one day at a time', 'continue the process', and then my term of growing self-care. Pam has been living alone in Wales as an asylum seeker for over a decade, as a widow and transnational mother. I discuss her narrative of surviving alone, persisting, and continuing alone. Dansitu is a refugee who arrived in the UK through family reunion processes. Her story is one I present as transitions through the episodes of communicating, improving, and working (on the front line). These are four very different narratives. I finish this chapter discussing the women's diverse experiences and the areas of similarity.

I discuss each narrative using a structure of episodic narrative analysis, which reflects the temporal nature of some of the women's experiences  (Neale 2017; Mueller 2019). I present the women's stories through three 'episodes', one for each sub-section related to generating data/research phases. I use this episodic structure to highlight temporality and transitions, as discussed in Chapter 4, in Sections 4.3.1, 4.5.3, and 4.6**.** My focus on transitions and resilience reflects the content of the stories presented to and interpreted by me. I have tried to represent the women's stories in ways that reflect their communication and presentation of their experiences with me. Therefore, the episodes in each woman's narrative are not evenly balanced in the lengths of each sub-section.  The imbalance of the size of the content on the pages here reflects the differences between the women's experiences and the different periods within a single woman's journey. The narrative content on the page here may be almost solely visual data (Irene) or several interview extracts (Sarah). My multi-modal approach, therefore, reflects each woman's emphasis on her modes of communication (Holsanova 2012; Jewitt 2015).

Consequently, I have included the digital story created with each mother at the start of their narratives. Each digital story represents collaboration directly in the forms of data (the audio-visual itself) and indirectly in how that collaboration and its product helped shape my words of analysis in this chapter. I am not just presenting my research in this chapter but have tried to represent each woman and her story presentation, reflecting the influence of representational (Pickering and Kara 2017) and decolonial  (Asher 2017) approaches in my work.

I explore each narrative and the transitions that retell the adversity of seeking sanctuary in Wales. I explore resilience to that adversity using Bourdieu's (Bourdieu

1977; Bourdieu  Nicole (ed) 1986) theories on forms of capital and systemic

reproduction of inequality and Obrist et al.'s (2010) multi-layered social resilience

framework. I use the framework's ideas on interactions at different societal levels to

explore how my participants might have built sustainable changes or transitions for

themselves. I do not use the framework directly. I explore resilience and learning as

related contextual (i.e., situated and temporal) social processes that impact

individual identity and well-being.  I use Wenger's (2018) framework of social

learning and Wenger-Trayner E. and B.'s  (2020)  broader definition of social

learning spaces to analyse the layered relations between social learning, social

networks, and individual social resilience. [46]

## 5.2  SARAH'S STORY

*"We feared our husbands who were fighting us, and now you've got to fear a system.*

*What's the point?"*

Sarah was a single mother when we met. She had spent years living as an asylum

seeker with her children before being granted discretionary Leave to Remain on

compassionate grounds. Sarah's transitions with marital and immigration status saw

her stripped off and then rebuilding her independence, self-esteem, and all forms of

capital.  Sarah had lived independently financially and as a mother for years before

arriving in the UK. She had arrived in Wales on a spousal visa, with the right to work,

but intimate partner violence left her in a precarious position as her right to be in the

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[46] I use Wenger's theory to define social learning as a process in which meaning and individual
belonging, and identity are developed in a community through social engagement and active
participation, as outlined in Chapter 1, Section 1.5 and Chapter 2, Section 5.3

UK had been dependent on her abusive (ex) spouse. She then moved through a cycle of asylum claims and appeals, denied the right to work while getting divorced and becoming a single mother. Sarah was granted Leave to Remain before our first interview but was not granted refugee status and five years of Leave to Remain. Instead, she was awarded two and half years of Discretionary Leave to Remain on compassionate grounds. She and her children now live with a short cycle of repeated claims - and associated costs – for Leave to Remain. [47]

**Image 3 - Sarah's Digital Story**

To watch Sarah's story, scan or click on the QR Code below



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[47] Please see Chapter 2 and the Appendix 1 (Glossary of terms) for more detail on different forms of Leave to Remain.

**Image 4 - Sarah's Storyboard**



| Family Detention | ➤ | Open Prison | ➤ | Resilient Motherhood |

## 5.2.1  FAMILY DETENTION

Sarah began her story with me with her experiences of intimate partner violence (domestic abuse). Her husband had been violent during their time in their home country. The situation worsened when they arrived in the UK.  Sarah found British resources that gave her the terminology and the knowledge to describe what was happening to her. Using that knowledge, she found a way to leave her husband. However, leaving did not lead her to freedom from abuse and fear, as the quotation on p.174, at the start of Section 5.2, shows. It led her from abuse from her husband to the 'slow violence'  (Mayblin et al. 2020; Saunders and Al-Om 2022) of the UK's asylum system. It is from that point that I share and explore Sarah's story.

**Image 5 – Sarah: Family Detention**

Sarah told me that this image (image 1) represents a type of detention centre, a psychological and symbolic one rather than a physical one. She stated that her sons are trapped, and there is only one way out. The people "*capable of snapping the wire*" are outside, not inside with her. In this aspect of the image, her not having the tools required to get out, I can see Sarah's intersectional oppression as an "absence of choices"  (hooks 2000, p.5). Those on the outside do not understand. Sarah explained that no one truly understands what she and her children are going through. They are trapped and isolated through a lack of understanding.

Although she and her children have "*freedom"* in their metaphorical enclosure, they are alone and want to leave, so it is a false freedom. Sarah cannot leave the pen without getting 'cut' or hurt, but she wants to go out. She is also trapped, not truly knowing how her children feel or how they are coping because their outward expressions of emotion can change.  Phillimore and Cheung (2021) discuss the violence of uncertainty, which goes beyond individual health and well-being for Sarah and her children. Those slow harms of uncertainty impact the family relationships and Sarah's understanding of her children's emotional needs (and her ability to meet those needs). Sarah even emphasised her coily hair, too, she told me, reflecting her "*brain that is coily"* as she's "*always thinking what to do."*  She is trapped with the constant ongoing thoughts of her situation and her children but has no escape or relief from them as she has no control. Sarah talked to me about the situation's impacts on learning, education, skills, and self-esteem.:

**Extract 1 – Sarah: To the Floor**

*What is happening to your experience? What is happening to your degree? It's getting older. What is happening to your confidence? It goes to the floor. And*

*that is what happened to me. So, instead of being able to lift myself up, I went back to the floor, and I was just there.*

Sarah had arrived in the UK as a highly educated, skilled, and experienced professional. She had spent time working and caring for her eldest child alone while her husband worked or studied overseas. She was used to being "*quite an independent woman*" and confident in caring for herself and her family. Sarah had relatively good access to all forms of capital, and in Wales, she initially had some economic capital, with her right to work as a spouse to a migrant. She felt forced to claim asylum when she fled from her husband when she was stripped of her right to work and, therefore, her access to any economic capital.

Sarah's experiences highlight the situated and contextual (including temporal) nature of forms of capital shown in the existing international literature (Lamba 2003). Her access to developing all four forms of capital was directly linked to her legal immigration status and the hierarchies I discuss in Chapter 2, Section 2.2. Her experiences demonstrate the connections between symbolic capital - that comes with citizenship and immigration hierarchies - and economic and social capital. Sarah's story shows how asylum processes in the UK systematically strip people of rights and create an intersectional, socio-legal hierarchy of status (Bassel 2012).

Sarah's words in the extract above describe the impact of those dehumanising processes on her self-esteem. She has not unlearnt anything. Her capabilities have not changed. Instead, she has been systematically denied the capacity to access or develop any form of capital. She is left living a life in limbo. She has been systematically excluded from key areas of participation in society and from engaging with her local community, affecting her self-esteem and personal

identity. Leaving her husband should have been a means by which Sarah could rebuild herself and her life, but her self-confidence was destroyed once more. Sarah and her children spent years living in limbo and uncertainty, in a metaphorical cage, with her capacity to cope reduced by external factors (not her skills and abilities).

## 5.2.2 OPEN PRISON

When we met for the second time, Sarah had been re-granted discretionary Leave to Remain, giving her family two and a half years of security. She has temporary relief from the slow violence and corrosion of uncertainty (Canning 2020; Mayblin et al. 2020). She had also been in her job for a few months. Her second drawing represents those changes in her life.

**Image 6 – Sarah: Open Prison**

Sarah's drawing above shows a transition and a shift in her perspectives compared to communication through her first drawing. Sarah talked me through the picture, telling me she had "*put on a bit of weight*" and had folded her hands to show that she was more comfortable. She explained that life has become "*quite a bit bearable"*. Significantly, Sarah has not represented her children in this drawing, as it suggests that she can focus on herself, knowing her children are settled for a fixed period. Sarah's picture shows the impacts of increased symbolic capital in Bourdiean terms – see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1 and Section 5.6.  This increase in symbolic capital comes through her renewed Leave to Remain, leading to access to economic capital from completing a probationary period in employment. I can also see increased social and cultural capital intertwined with increased exits in the barbed wire to the outside world. Those exits are bi-directional, and Sarah can see the grass representing growth on the other side. She told me that "*maybe the job has contributed a lot*", explaining that she has found work-based role models from whom she learns new skills and gets support as a colleague and a woman.

Sarah's life has reached this stage through her determination to resist the harm the asylum system (and her ex-husband) inflicted on her. She talked me through her learning experiences and directly linked them to her development of social resilience. Sarah had no choice but to pick herself off "the floor" because, as she explained, she had two children depending on her. She started by going to community groups for mothers and children. It was in and through those spaces that Sarah learnt about short courses that were running and voluntary opportunities that might be available. These experiences were a lifeline for Sarah: "*all these little things, they start to lift your confidence, over time. They start to build you up, lift your*

*confidence"*. In Sarah's narratives, I can see the communities of practice and social learning spaces that have enabled Sarah to participate and engage with others, find a community where she could belong, and rebuild her sense of self (Wenger 2018). The process of social learning has been vital for Sarah's well-being and resilience.

Eventually, through one of the community groups, Sarah was offered the opportunity to do a postgraduate qualification. The course required practitioner hours, and she carried out those hours as a volunteer in the same community groups she had once attended. Those experiences helped Sarah rebuild herself and find her current employment assisting others in a civil society organisation. She said to me: "*So you can see these things work. They don't, they need to give funding these little projects. They look little, but they are life savers for some people.*" Those experiences preceded my relationship with Sarah, but she spoke extensively about them during our second interview. Through the combination of her words and her drawing, I could see the changes that had happened in Sarah's life. I can see value creation in Sarah's social learning spaces in her narrative of those changes. That value was and is Sarah rebuilding herself, contributing to her community and going on to support others.

### 5.2.3  RESILIENT MOTHERHOOD

The photograph below,  Image 7 - Lone and Digital Motherhood, was taken during the Covid-19 pandemic. It shows a snapshot of Sarah and her children's involvement in a digital community. The photograph shows Sarah and her children participating in a virtual church service, dressed in smart church clothes and focused on the service running on the laptop screen.

**Image 7 - Lone and Digital Motherhood**



This photo also represents the duality of Sarah's narrative and the societal expectations she lives with. Sarah's journey in the asylum system is not over. She is now in a cycle of repeated claims for discretionary Leave to Remain every two and a half years. She needs resilience for herself and her children in the face of that ongoing stress, uncertainty, financial cost, and systemic harm. Sarah's narrative is "*about you as a woman and what you, the society, put you through* "and her role as a mother. She told me, "*you have to do to make them responsible adults because it's my hands to help these boys to be what they can be.*" Sarah carried the load of minimising her children from harm caused by others, including the asylum system, and ensuring that her children grow up to be 'good refugees' or 'good citizens' (Gabriel and Harding 2009a; Bennett 2018). Sarah is aware her mothering is judged by her capacity to achieve both outcomes, an experience shared with other sanctuary-seeking and migrant mothers in the UK (Erel 2018).  She explained the role motherhood played for her.

**Extract 2 – Sarah: Motherhood as Motivation**

*My major motivation was the children. To encourage them to keep going. I didn't want them to see me sad and crying all the time, so that's why I did all these other things.*

Motherhood was and is not simply a societal and biological duty for Sarah. When stripped of all other forms of identity, she retained her identity as a mother, which was her motivation. In my interpretation, Sarah's community, her learning space, was reduced to just three people, to a small family – her and her sons. Her motivation was her position in that family and her need to participate as a mother, the mother she wanted to be. She took them out to community groups, as discussed in Section 5.2.2, which helped her to rebuild herself and their lives. I can see how vital keeping busy was for the whole family. The importance of keeping busy is a subject I return to further in several parts of Chapter 7, particularly Section 7.3.1.

My findings in this area reflect those from research with young people in Wales seeking asylum (Iqbal 2016) and Morrice's (2007)earlier research with mothers in England. In an incremental, not always linear, process, she could start engaging in wider (albeit still limited) communities. My analysis suggests that through her participation, she learned and created value as part of communities for her family as she gained mental and emotional strength. Those communities included a church, a space where she gained support and a place of belonging for herself and her children. Sarah's family may not have acquired legal citizenship, but she was building them a form of cultural citizenship and supporting their well-being.

That church community became so important to Sarah and her children's lives that they continued to join the community online during the covid-19 pandemic. The

importance to the family, to Sarah, is shown through her choice to send me a photograph of them engaged in a virtual service. Sarah's work provided her family with the means to continue to engage and participate in the community that had been such a core social learning space and place of belonging. They joined from home, digitally, still presenting themselves in smart attire – showing the importance Sarah has placed on their cultural community and its role in helping her raise her boys to be *"what they can be"*. I see Sarah's systemic and structural pressures to be 'good refugees' and (cultural) citizens (Gabriel and Harding 2009b; O'Neill 2018) and the community layers of resilience she has built around herself through a critical social learning space.

## 5.3  IRENE'S STORY

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<p align="center">"One day at a time"</p>

Irene spoke very little English when we met, so she expressed herself fluently through her drawings. Her detailed pictures convey so much. She was not confident with her English language abilities at either interview.  I try to represent the overall message Irene was trying to communicate with each of them. We talked at length. However, we had the help of family members to translate (and some of my limited knowledge of her 'first' language). Irene's perception of her lack of English language skills was significant to her story – she spent more time with her drawing than with our interview dialogue. She described the picture to me in her first language and English. I chose to use creative methods mainly to provide an alternative form of communication from verbal dialogues. I, therefore, present her story with an in-depth focus on her images, supported by her words but not through equal representation of

them both. That is not a reflection of my perception of Irene's ability to communicate in English but to best represent how she presented her narrative directly with and to me.

**Image 8 - Irene's Digital Story**

To watch Irene's story, click on or scan the QR code below.

**Image 9 - Irene's Visual Story**
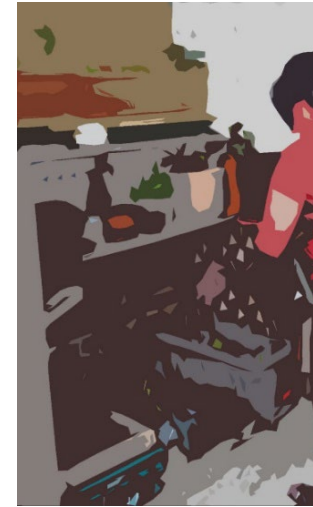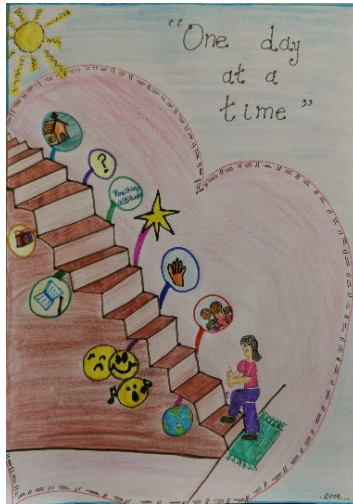


One day at a time → Continue the process → Self-Care

## 5.3.1 ONE DAY AT A TIME

Irene arrived in the UK with her family – husband and two children -and they were all quickly dispersed to Wales. Irene had had to leave behind a career she loved, and she spoke no English when she arrived. When we met for the first time, Irene and her family had been living in Wales for a few months.

**Image 10 – One day at a time**
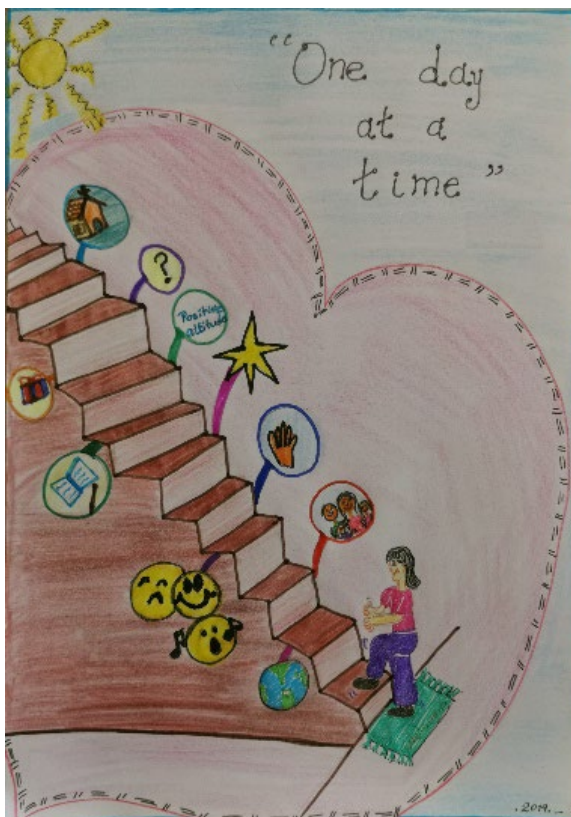


Irene described this image as representing the start of a new journey/chapter in her life. It is a drawing in which I can see the multiple layers of interactions that develop capital and build social resilience, as defined by Obrist et al. (2010). Fleeing to safety and arriving in Wales is not the end of her story. It is the beginning. Irene depicted a journey that is hers –not the same as her husband's and children's, even

though they share critical parts. Irene's drawing reflects much positivity, but that is not how she initially felt in Wales. She said, "*when we arrived, I cried a lot.*" At times, she found it hard to find the strength to cope with the situation of "*new customs, new rules, new speak, new all*". In those words, I can see how the forced transition to Wales has resulted in Irene losing cultural and social capital, with her need to learn new norms and values (Lamba 2003; Bourdieu 2018b).

Irene and her family had left behind everything they knew – their community, home, jobs/studies. Irene's husband spoke good English and was able to use his professional skills as a volunteer. Her children were learning English quickly and were enrolled in education. For Irene, however, the losses continued as she could not speak English when she arrived and could not offer her professional, educational skills in any context in Wales. In Irene's sense of loss, I see her loss of identity, purpose, and belonging. That loss, to me, relates to her loss of social and cultural capital. Irene had been forced to leave her social networks when forced to flee to Wales. She could not find a space to re-develop her sense of belonging through new networks and a new identity in the ways her husband and children had. Language was a key barrier for Irene.  Moreover, I can see the symbolic power of language and symbolic capital's relationship with cultural and social capital.

In Irene's comparisons between her experiences and her children's, I can see how social learning connects the individual and community. Irene's family could participate more, so they were engaged in social learning and building new identities. In contrast, Irene's experience has involved identity loss when an individual cannot participate in a new community. Irene simultaneously felt both sad for herself and

"*happy for family".* The new lives she could see her husband and children experiencing helped her find a "positive attitude" for herself that she also has hope for a fresh start and future in their new country.

Irene's drawing shows that while her journey is an individual one, she will also take each step with community support alongside her. That support is demonstrated by the image of her family (the four people), a hand (help), the globe (the local international community) and the yellow faces (activities in which she participates). Irene explained that her drawing includes support in social spaces and places where she could practice speaking English and finding information. She is alone on her journey, but there is support from people and learning (the book) along the way. In this way, I can see elements of a 'community of practice' again (Wenger 1998; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020) in which Irene is an active participant and is building her new life and identity. The local community is alongside Irene on her journey, helping her with those steps and her positive attitude. It is that positivity and hope that Irene shows in her drawing.  She is at the bottom of those steps, but her picture reflects a belief she will get to the top, taking 'one day at a time'.

## 5.3.2  CONTINUE THE PROCESS

When I met Irene for the second time, she had recently been granted refugee status, our conversation's key focus. She also told me much about what she had been doing since our first interview. The effect of getting 'Leave to Remain' is evident in Irene's second drawing. She explained that she is still on a journey with a long way to go, but she is no longer at the start of it.

**Image 11 - Continuing the Journey**
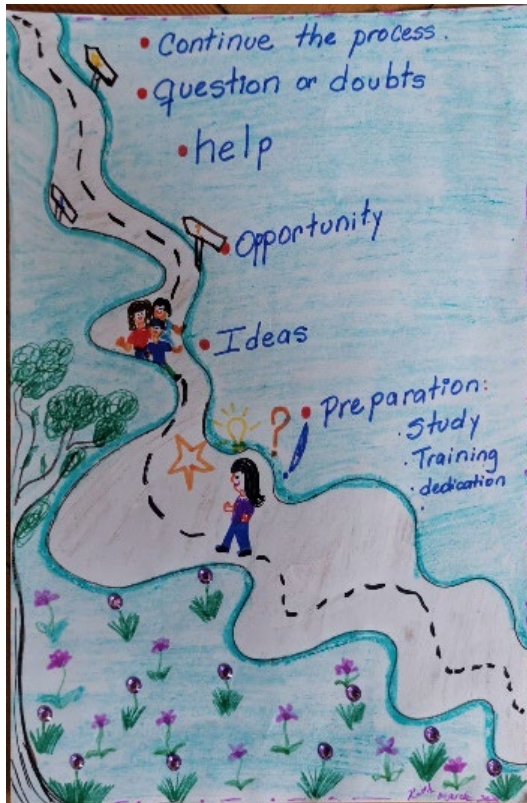


Again, Irene chose to depict her journey; it is a journey she will need support, including ideas, from other people. It is, therefore, a drawing that highlights the temporal development of social resilience. Irene has started her journey towards a life in Wales now, shown by her position a little along the path in her picture. This drawing marks the way with concepts rather than social/community spaces. She also represented the growth in her life with the flowers to the bottom left of the image. These details in her drawing show Irene's confidence and purpose development; she is on her journey of 'citizenship', starting with the cultural aspects  (O'Neill 2018). The 'preparation' she does now and the people who support her will help bring new opportunities for her.

We can also see that the nature of Irene's journey ahead and her reflections on the journey so far have changed. She no longer faces an uphill journey with many steps and "bumps". Now, Irene is on a smooth, clear path. Her life ahead and that journey will not be straightforward, as shown through the bends in the path. But we can see that the trail straightens towards the end, with arrows guiding the way, too. At present, there is still a lot that is unknown to Irene. Irene depicts herself at the '*preparation*' stage of her journey. She told me that the study and training in her drawing refer to ESOL classes and perhaps re-skilling in a new profession or adapting her existing professional expertise. Irene is rebuilding her life and identity through social learning in a new community.

Irene rebuilt herself through social learning by building layers of social resilience. Irene's drawing echoes much existing discourse on education, which often focuses on the economic benefits of education, as I highlighted in Chapter 3. Existing research literature has emphasised the role of education as a route or pathway to employment (Bloch 2008; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019; Holtom and Iqbal 2020).  Irene is already studying English and is a very active volunteer in her community. However, these activities are not final goals or achievements in themselves. I see a reflection of Klenk's (2017) findings on women seeking sanctuary in England. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Klenk found that informal, non-certified forms of community learning were seen as lesser than the qualifications male counterparts gained. Irene now sees her journey as an ongoing process, not one to a specific destination. She reflected her view with the words "*continue the process*" at the top of the drawing. We can see Irene walking towards something, but that final destination is not yet known – it is literally off the page/out of view. For me,

Irene's "*process*" can be seen as the social learning process of community engagement and interaction through which Irene is re-building her identity in a new home.

### 5.3.3 GROWING SELF-CARE

During the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person community activity stopped for prolonged periods. Irene sent me her set of photographs during the first UK lockdown. In the explanations/descriptions accompanying her photographs, Irene explained that it had become vital to her to find other ways to keep busy and have a sense of purpose. So, she started gardening, growing plants such as strawberries, radishes, and herbs; plants could be grown in window boxes indoors or in small garden pots. She also took to crafting and creating butterflies and other art objects. Irene sent me several photographs of her engaging in these nurturing and creative activities, highlighting their significance for her in maintaining her mental well-being – acts of self-care.

**Image 12 - Growing Self-Care**

The pandemic and the UK lockdowns plunged Irene's family into isolation (as they did for us all). Irene was isolated from the places and ways she had developed her "*positive attitude*". In this photograph, we can see that Irene is now alone. Although she had her husband and children as companions, they worked and studied virtually. Her activities outside the family unit were more curtailed than for the rest of the family, as she explained to me. The pandemic came as Irene and her family were settling into life in Wales with the security of refugee status. She had stopped crying every day, and the whole family were "*showing, by fitting in, by helping and by continuing with life*", and she had found support "*to advance*". I would argue that she had found social learning spaces that were helping her and her family develop a sense of belonging in a new community (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). For Irene, her life had gained a new sense of meaning.

Yet, the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns meant that Irene's direct engagement with the wider community ceased, so she had to focus on herself rather than social spaces and learning. Irene sent me several photographs of her gardening and crafting activities with the words "*keeping busy during lockdown*". From my earlier findings and research from scholars such as Iqbal (Iqbal 2016), I knew that keeping active and occupied is a core coping mechanism for asylum seekers and refugees. Irene explained that occupying her time in this practical way during lockdowns had been vital for her well-being after the trauma of fleeing from her life and home for safety. She had found ways to keep her mind busy so she did not dwell on the past and all that she had lost. Then, those coping mechanisms and new areas of life were taken from her by a global health crisis. Irene found new coping methods by teaching herself new home-based gardening and crafting skills. I found it significant that Irene

chose to grow practical plants – food – and craft items associated with new life and beauty, butterflies, that could be used to decorate the home and garden.  It seemed to me that she was seeking not just to keep a "*positive attitude*" by keeping her hands and mind busy. She was creating a positive environment in a practical, nurturing, and creative way, too.

## 5.4  PAM'S STORY

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*"I survive on people."*

Pam had run a small business and lived with her husband and children until her husband was murdered for political reasons. Pam then needed to flee for her safety and arrived both widowed and alone in Wales. She left her children with a relative, believing that to be the safest and temporary option. She has since spent over a decade living alone in Wales as an asylum seeker.

**Image 13 - Pam's Digital Story**

To watch Pam's story, click on or scan the code below.

**Image 14 - Pam's Visual Story**





Surviving Alone on People → Keep On Going → Continuing Alone
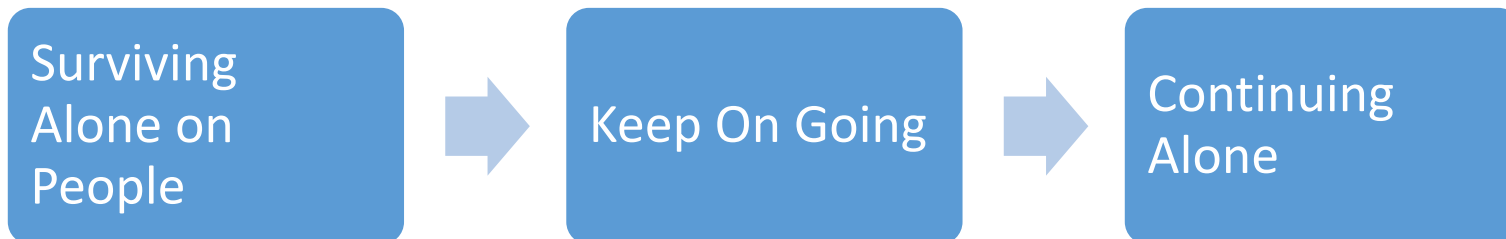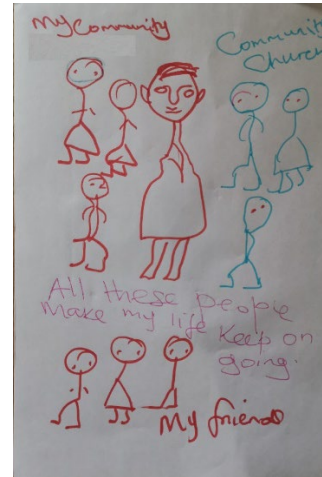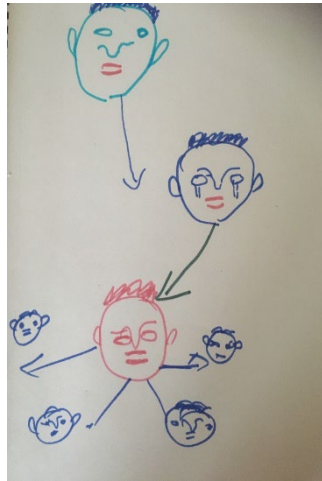
## 5.4.1 SURVIVING ALONE ON PEOPLE

When I met with Pam, she had been in Wales for about a decade and still lived in the asylum system without Leave to Remain. The Home Office took four years to process Pam's first claim and rejected it. She had been through the legal process for an appeal, exploring alternative options and a new claim since then. Pam has not legally brought her children to join her and provide for them financially. A few years ago, one of her children went missing; their whereabouts are still unknown. Pam talked to me about how she has coped with her traumas and a life in limbo. Pam's focus with me was on the limbo and disconnections in her life and the impact on her emotionally and mentally. Her image of disembodied heads was a visual embodiment of life in Wales.

**Image 15 – Pam: Surviving Alone**
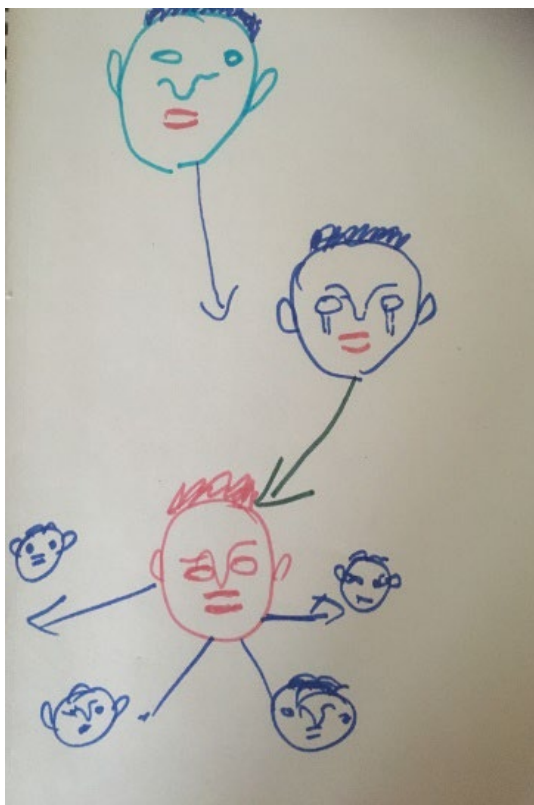
In Pam's first drawing with me, shown above, she represented three critical stages of her life in Wales. Those stages reflected her transition from arrival, being utterly alone and sad, to finding a means of survival through human interaction. She told me, "*the first place I go to when I was new in this country was a church.*" Pam's new religious community provided her with an initial social network. It taught her about options for everyday life as an asylum seeker with no capital in any form in Wales:

**Extract 3 – Pam: Community Learning**

*Yes, yes, then I find those people in church. Then I talked to them; they will talk. Then they start telling me about cos they ask do you have family here. "No.". "Do you have this, do you have..." They until we reached on that point. "what do you do in the house on this month?" I said: "Just sit, when it is Sunday, come. " Then they explained to me that there is a place where you can go and meet people and do this, and this. I said, "How do you do that?" They explained.*

Pam explained that the church community was where she started learning about everyday life in Wales and places where she could meet other people. For me, the church community was where Pam began building a little social and cultural capital.  Pam had added: "*I started getting exposure with people. That's how I started*". The community church's role for Pam was supportive, providing her with the beginnings of some social networks and informal community and social learning. Pam's experiences support Morrice's (2007) and O'Neill and Hubbard's (2010) findings on the importance of informal learning. Pam's story shows how informal social learning moved her towards a sense of belonging, cultural and social citizenship or integration.  Pam learned about volunteering opportunities and places

where she could do short courses from that initial church community. Pam had

completed secondary school in her home country but had not studied further. She

did not wish to gain tertiary-level qualifications in the UK; she wanted to work and be

seen as employable. She talked to me about volunteering and courses in that

context, telling me:

**Extract 4 – Pam: I survive on people**

> *If I decided to do …this course…Then, volunteer, I want to... I can't say... is it*
> *skills, to improve skills... I don't see which skills! But at least to get*
> *experience. And to interact with people. Because the more you interact with*
> *people, the more ideas and advices from different people. To meet friends*
> *because you don't know who gonna help you. Different... that's why I told you*
> *I survive on people!*

Pam cannot always see which skills she might gain from short courses and

volunteering, but she is clear about what she gains from human interaction. She

makes friends in those spaces, learns from them and has developed a support

network through them. In this way, we can see that Pam's participation in a

community space and the engagement of others with her is a social activity as

learning. Her church and other community spaces are social learning spaces for her.

Additionally, Pam keeps herself healthy mentally by keeping her mind busy,

so there is a symbiotic role and benefit of informal learning in community spaces.

That symbiotic process defines Pam's experiences with local communities as social

learning processes.  Pam interacts with others in the process of mutual engagement

for a common purpose for mutual benefit. The community gains Pam's time and

contributions as a volunteer. Pam gains advice and support that is utterly vital for her

and helps her build a form of cultural citizenship, as O'Neill (2018) discusses in her work. As she is denied legal and economic citizenship, cultural citizenship and social learning are essential for Pam. Pam told me: "*I survive on people*", which has remained true for her beyond her early days – and years – in Wales.

## 5.4.2  KEEP ON GOING

In our second interview, Pam talked more deeply about community support, particularly her coping capacity. She explained that while she may have no power or control over Home Office decisions, she can keep herself "busy, busy, busy" and often "busy from nine in the morning till ten at night". Pam's busyness is through social interaction in community spaces of learning. In her second drawing (Image 16 Pam: Keep on Going), compared to the first, there is no longer an image of disembodiment but whole people in groups together.

**Image 16 Pam: Keep on Going**

In her second drawing, Pam represented the people surrounding her now –
her support system that she had developed to survive. She represented her primary
social communities – a support group, a church, and friends from those places. She
describes these communities as the people who "*make my life keep going*". That
sense of survival through human support comes across strongly from this drawing,
as it did with her first. Pam volunteers in several places, including at a local
support/community group and with her church. Those spaces are where Pam has
built localised social capital and the strength to cope with the trauma and challenges
she continues to face. Pam's social networks provide her with spaces for learning
and practical and emotional support. She is trying to find sanctuary in a life of asylum
limbo, separated from her children. Through her social networks, she has found a
sense of solidarity and belonging that we see also discussed in O'Neill's work (2018)
on asylum seekers and communities.

Pam's words show a shared experience with other participants, such as Irene.
Pam's experiences show how vital keeping busy can be for sanctuary seekers to
build community-based social capital and social resilience.  I will explore this concept
of keeping busy to further build resilience in Chapters 6 (Section 6.4) and 7 (Section
7.3.1.). In the image above and the extract below, I can see that Pam keeps herself
busy through social interaction and learning. She can do that in spaces that provide
an environment where Pam can build social capital. Pam could not develop her
social and cultural capital into economic capital. The limited symbolic capital of her
status as an asylum seeker comes with legal restrictions preventing access to
earning an income. Pam legally cannot develop economic capital or resilience.
However, the importance of her social capital is, for her, literally a matter of survival

– core social resilience for the adversity she has faced. The communities that support Pam sometimes give financial support or help with clothes or food. But, for Pam, the support most vital for her comes in less tangible ways:

**Extract 5 – Pam: We have to socialise with people**

*"So sometime people from the Church there is like, um, I think it's like an organisation... Sometime after, like two weeks, they give you £30. They help other people like that. So that's the life we are living in. But we have to socialise with people. You can't use the rate for yourself because of your status. But most people, when they get such a refusals, they get really down. Some of them they go through the, I don't know, the depression or whatever. Because they put them to the wall, they don't know what to do. But I'm always telling them: I say, that is not the end of the world. Because if it was, maybe we should have been removed a long time ago. But there is a reason because I'm always telling we are not criminals, we are not doing anything. So, we just go and socialise with people and do what you can do."*

Pam and I had been talking about the ban on working for asylum seekers just before the above extract. So, she described that sometimes she could get small amounts of money from the church as a gesture of help and kindness but not as payment for work. However, she continued to talk about the impact of being refused asylum and that "*most people when they get such a refusals, they get really down…. The depression or whatever.*" Pam explained that she had avoided severe depression through her interactions in community learning. Once again, there is a shared experience with Irene and Sarah regarding the role that learning plays in mental health. We can see that Pam's perspective is similar to Olena's, Chapter 7, Section 7.3.2 and Gabina and Webet's, Chapter 6, Section 6.4. Pam and other participants discussed the discourse of criminalisation of asylum seekers; see Marcia

and Olena's words in Chapter 6, Sections 6.2 and 6.4. Through their stories, Pam and other participants kept reiterating how vital learning is for their mental health, helping them cope with the stigma and challenges they face.   Pam's learning spaces are not classrooms in educational institutions but are community groups and organisations. Those community learning spaces are Pam's survival spaces, reflected in her choice to represent them in both drawings.

### 5.4.3  CONTINUING ALONE

The asylum system has, I would argue, held Pam hostage for over a decade. She has been kept apart from her children by immigration rules and excluded from full participation in society by asylum regulations. She has the burden of having to prove her worth with limited agency. Although Pam is not lonely anymore and has people to help "*keep on going*" (Image 16), she is ultimately still alone with a life on hold or in limbo.

**Image 17 – Pam: Still Alone**

Pam sent me several photographs during the first UK covid-19 lockdown, and the picture above was the one that best represented Pam's situation for me. In the photograph, Pam sits alone outside the building of one of the first communities she joined. Pam was alone in all the photographs she sent me. She drew herself surrounded by others, but the snapshots of her life on camera were of a woman alone. Pam has built herself a support network, but in so many ways, she is still just as alone as she was when she first arrived. Overall, Pam's drawings, words, and photographs reflect just how limited her development of social capital has been beyond a source of survival.

Pam's narrative shows us that there might be much community and civil society support for sanctuary seekers in Wales, but that support has limitations. Pam has not built significant social networks beyond very localised community spaces. She does not have permission from or in networks with more Bourdieuan symbolic capital[48] or direct power and influence. There is a Welsh Government plan to be a Nation of Sanctuary, and numerous civil society organisations are working towards that goal. Local community spaces available for Pam have been a lifeline for her. Yet, the development of social and cultural capital beyond the refugee support community is just as limited for Pam in Wales as it is for sanctuary seekers in England/at a UK level  (Zetter et al. 2005; Cheung and Phillimore 2017) and other Global North Countries (Lamba 2003; Merkel et al. 2008).

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[48] See my discussions on symbolic capital in Chapter 3

Pam's life has been on hold for a decade, but for everyone else, life has continued. Pam's children have now grown up, and one is missing. They may never be reunited. Using Moorhouse and Cunningham's (2012) definitions, I describe her role as a mother as fractured.[49]  She has not been able to bring her children to join her. Her motherhood is primarily invisible in Wales. Few people around her know the extent of her circumstances – many do not even know she is a mother. She told me she feels too old to pursue the nursing career she considered when she first arrived, and she wonders how she will support herself as she grows old, deprived of the ability to prepare for that stage of life. The hostility of the UK immigration system shows its impact on uncertainty and isolation Pam. Her experiences support the findings of other researchers on the gendered harm isolation caused by the isolation and uncertainty of the asylum system (Canning 2020; Phillimore and Cheung 2021). Pam's life in isolated limbo is represented so well by photographs of her alone yet in her local spaces of social networks. A decade after her arrival in the UK, her church community, a refugee support group, and a place she volunteers remain Pam's primary sources of social support. Pam relies on those communities to keep alive that glimmer of hope that she will "*maybe one day"* be able to start living and not just surviving.

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[49] I discuss this aspect of my data and findings in  more detail in Shobiye and Parker (2022)

## 5.5  DANSITU'S STORY

*"I got more confidence."*

Dansitu arrived in Wales through family reunion regulations. Her husband came to the UK first, and once he was granted Refugee Status, the family applied for Dansitu and their children to join him in Wales. Dansitu arrived with Leave to Remain and, therefore, with the right to work. Her immigration status has not changed during her years in Wales. Dansitu did not experience the asylum system the same way as Sarah, Irene, and Pam, which reflects some of the differences in her narrative.

**Image 18  - Dansitu's Digital Story**

To watch Danistu's story, click on or scan the QR code.

**Image 19 - Dansitu's Visual Story**



I am happy for every thing now

I am happy to every thing in uk life now. Evenee I am not improve my pronoucen but I have more confidence to speek, and every night I go to work and I am happy to work and improve my lif and my fenwily life.
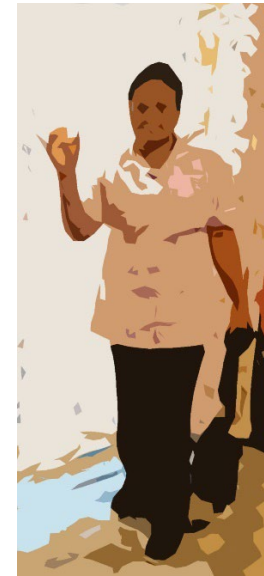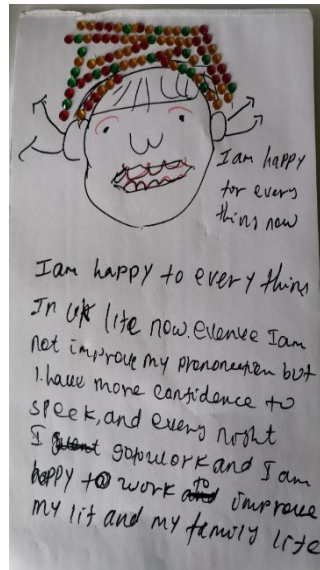
| Communicating | → | Improving Family Life | → | Working on frontline |

## 5.5.1 COMMUNICATING

Dansitu arrived speaking some English but was not confident about her English language skills. Dansitu's narrative in our first conversation focused on communication and her self-confidence.

**Image 20 – Dansitu: Communicating**

When Dansitu and I first met, she had been living in Wales for a few years, and we talked primarily about her arrival and her early time in the country. We then moved on to the present day. Dansitu chose to represent the critical challenge she had faced, communication, and her transitions with it, when she created her drawing at the end of the conversation.

Dansitu depicted her challenges with communication in her first drawing. She chose to show her development in communication over time. She represents her arrival when she could not understand anything, the transition to starting to understand, and then her current (at the time of the interview) of communicating sufficiently well to work and carry out everyday tasks independently. The arrows in the picture show the direction of communication. The first of the three faces shows an expression that, she told me, represents that communication initially was "difficult" for her. The third face shows a "*smile*" because "*now it's better"*. Dansitu chose to focus on communication in her drawing as that is where she has faced the most challenges. She initially felt lonely, isolated, sad and frustrated by her inability to speak to people and understand what they were saying. Dansitu expressed a strong need for independence and agency, a topic I explore further in the following two chapters, particularly Chapter 7 Section 7.4 with Olena and Mariyln's stories. Without the ability to communicate with others, she would have remained limited in choice and excluded from key areas of life in Wales.

Dansitu arrived in the UK through the family reunion process for refugees. Her husband had come to Wales first and navigated and investigated housing, healthcare, and education systems. Dansitu did not have to learn about British systems or critical aspects of everyday life alone, unlike Pam and Sarah. Dansitu discussed these aspects of arriving in Wales with me and explained that, as a result, communication was the most significant learning need she had on arrival. Dansitu's husband had worked hard for his family's arrival, even making friends with other families with women who could befriend Dansitu on arrival. Dansitu's immediate concerns were focused on her ability to speak English to communicate for herself

and regain her independence in her home country. At first, she could not do much for herself independently because of the language barrier.

Extract 6 – Dansitu: The Accent

*"Yeah, yeah, when I come here, still when I'm go shopping, I didn't hear what, the accent is very difficult for me.  I'd only heard African voice… When you come here, the accent very hard. Even when they say to me, "need to bag". I didn't hear the "need to bag" [both laugh]. I say "sorry" three times again… They say again, I weird now".*

Dansitu's two key communication issues were related to accents - understanding British accents and confidence in speaking English with her accent. In Extract 6 above, we can see some of the detail represented by the first face in Dansitu's drawing. She'd "*only heard African voice*" before she arrived in Wales. The impact of not being able to understand everyday interactions and having to ask people to repeat themselves impacted her self-esteem and added to a sense of being 'other'; she felt "*weird*". At this time, Dansitu also lacked confidence speaking English, saying elsewhere in our conversation: "*it's difficult to say in English only*". We can see the impact of linguistic isolation creating and reproducing social isolation and exclusion, as discussed in existing empirical literature by Nawyn et al. (2012). Research by Woulds and Simpson  (2010) highlighted the importance and lack of "authenticity" of materials in ESOL classrooms. They argued for ESOL teaching materials and pedagogy that mirrors everyday communication needs and experiences. In Dansitu's story, we can see why such materials and authentic

classrooms for simple interactions are so important, even for those arrivals who may already have some proficiency in English.

## 5.5.2 IMPROVING

When I met Dansitu for our second interview, she had recently started a new job. She worked in the same field (health/social care) as at our first interview but for a new employer. She expressed her pleasure in being able to tell me about the role, and we talked about her growing self-confidence. Much of that self-confidence was related to her new job and improved English language skills, developed through everyday immersion at work.

**Image 21 – Dansitu: Improving**
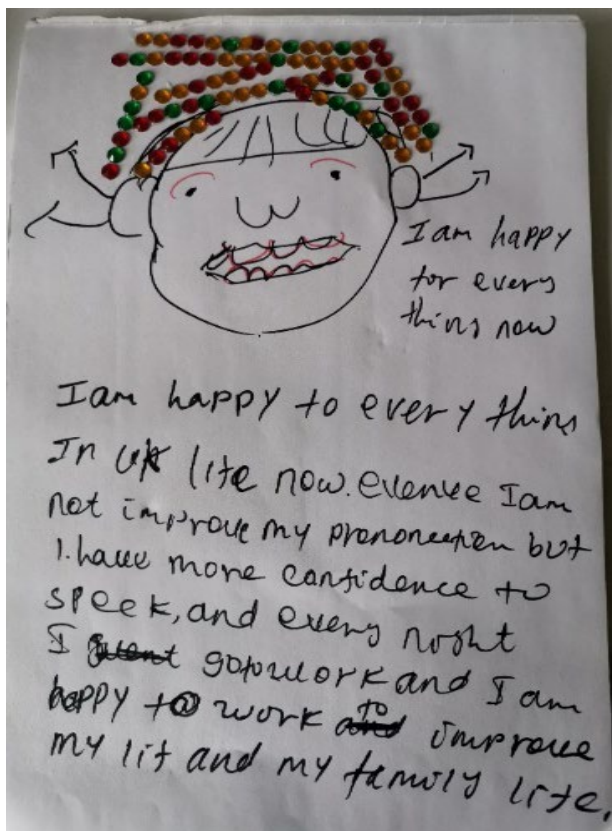
In Dansitu's second image above, we can see the same focus on communication but with happiness and confidence this time. Danistu represents herself in the present with just one smiling face. She includes more detail, reflecting her sense of stability and contentment. She has two arrows by each ear, representing an increase in her communication skills. Next to her face, she has written a sentence about being happy now. Dansitu wrote a short paragraph under the drawing, too, rather than visually representing her perspective. Her use of written language reflects her increased confidence in her abilities. She wanted to show me on the page and through her speech how much more confident she had become. She said to me, right at the start of our second interview, that she is aware that she will never have "*correct*" (her choice of word) pronunciation, but she no longer cares about that because she can communicate. Her confidence comes because she knows she speaks well because of her immersion in English at work.

However, Dansitu also talked to me about her exclusion from formal classes. Her accent and pronunciation seemed to be an additional barrier to the issue of childcare costs.

**Extract 7 – Dansitu: Layers of marginalisation**

*Dansitu: Yes, I've planned to in September to go to college. I tried past times in the one from the library. She said your result is show entry 2. I said, she don't. I said I don't want to go in entry 2 because when I'm come this country, I finish entry 3.*

*Laura: Yeah*

*Dansitu: She said improve at home. She said come English class, okay?*

*Laura: Yeah*

*Dansitu: We discuss to start English class there, two in a week, £18 pay for the babies*

*Laura: Yes. £18?*

*Dansitu: Yes, in a one day for 2 hour to keep the babies there. After I said, after the come from the nursery. So, I'm when calculate is going more than 200 in a month.*

*Laura: That's a lot*

*Dansitu: Yeah, she don't... Even she said entry 1 what I learn in entry 1 I don't want because I stay home, I improve from the internet my English. Sometimes, I study from the internet English.*

Exclusion from English classes had dented her confidence until she found she was communicating effectively in everyday life. Dansitu had started ESOL classes when her youngest child was a baby and had ceased attending as she saw it was not manageable. Despite those challenges, Dansitu had learned some English in her initial course. She had been learning English ever since through everyday immersion in the workplace.  Despite her progress, her attempt to return to classes was hindered by staff assessing her as having a lower level (two) of English than she had had previously (level three).[50] I could hear Dansitu's progress just between our two interviews. So, for me, Dansitu's story reflects issues of misrecognition through a lack of understanding of her capabilities. That lack of recognition comes through the marginalisation of linguistic capital, furthering isolation, as Nawyn et al. (2012) discussed. From the rest of the conversation, Dansitu's accent seemed a potential

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[50] There are three levels for ESOL classes, reflecting the National Curriculum Framework for qualifications. Level 1 is the lowest level and Level 3 is the level considered equivalent to GCSE. Level 3 is typically the level required for any tertiary level courses and by employers.

source of discrimination, even with an ESOL class. Accents and pronunciation were a topic Dansitu returned to repeatedly, highlighting their significance for her.

The overt discrimination based on boundaries of linguistic capital was in addition to the more tangible, demonstrable issue of the prohibitive childcare costs (even with both Dansitu and her husband working). The issue of childcare as a barrier that disproportionately impacts mothers has been raised repeatedly for two decades in Wales  (Crawley and Crimes 2009a; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). Yet this issue remained unresolved for Dansitu and other participants (see Chapter 6). Furthermore, I could see similarities in Dansitu's story with the problems that Klenk (2017) faced with her research in England (see further discussion on Klenk's work in Chapter 3). That is, Dansitu is facing challenges getting the validation of an ESOL certificate, enabling her to enter higher education and return to her previous profession. Dansitu's narrative shows the intersecting layers of discrimination and marginalisation she faces as a refugee mother.

Dansitu's story exemplifies the potential benefits of 'authentic' (Woulds and Simpson 2010) and real-world ESOL learning, where marginalisation occurs. Dansitu had been unable to continue with classes as a mother to small children. She learnt and improved her English language skills through everyday life, mainly working. Dansitu's increased confidence in her language skills comes from regular communication at work, highlighting the importance of such opportunities that Chick and Hannagan-Lewis discuss (2019). She has also been teaching herself at home: *"talking practice also. I practice that from the internet"*. Self-learning and teaching have been vital for Dansitu and have worked well for her when combined with

informal workplace learning. Only time will tell whether Dansitu can retrain/transfer her qualifications or face the exclusionary barriers of eligibility criteria Sarah met**.** For now, Dansitu expresses a sense of progress for her and her family.

### 5.5.3  WORKING ON THE FRONTLINE

Dansitu talked to me with pride about her new job and her ability to (jointly) provide for her family and build them all a future. She also spoke to me more about helping her children with their schoolwork. Dansitu met particular constructions of 'good mothering' (Christopher 2012) and 'good refugee' (Gabriel and Harding 2009b). She met these constructions through working and caring for her children, a mothering role that formed part of her values. The photographs she sent me emphasised her role as a working mother.

**Image 22 – Dansitu: Working**
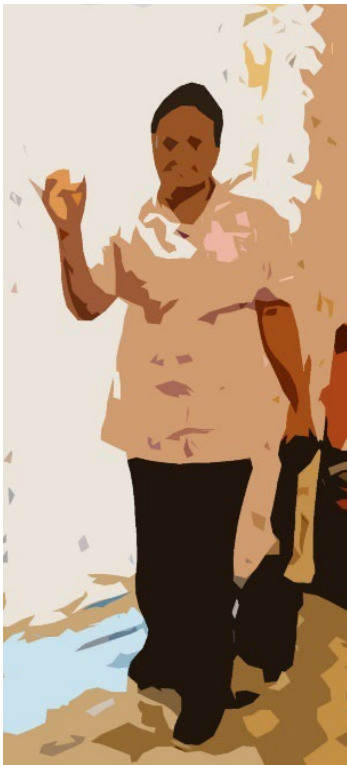
Dansitu is employed in a health/social care role and chose to represent that work with the photographs she sent me. She also sent me pictures of her family, showing their happy bonding times. Her photographs, accompanying words, and the data generated during our interviews demonstrated a clear connection for Dansitu between her work and her family. Danistu's photograph and second drawing reflect her focus on the future positively rather than the past and the challenges she has faced. That ability to think about the future reflects Dansitu's increased confidence, contentment, and sense of belonging. Dansitu explained that speaking English more confidently and having a secure job means she can *"improve my life [sic] and my family life"*. She also talked to me about her ambitions for future study and her determination to pursue a professional career in healthcare. Dansitu's narrative supports Court's (2017) and Phillimore et al.'s (2007) findings that ESOL learners feel more integrated when communicating well enough to do things for themselves.

**Extract 8 – Dansitu: Confidence, not depression**

*Dansitu: I got more confidence*
*Laura: So, do you speak to more people now?*
*Dansitu: Yes!*
*Laura: Yeah, you're smiling more when you talk about it.*
*Dansitu: Yes. When you every day is work, you see, when you stay home, you depression.*
*Laura: Yeah*
*Dansitu: You think about the work, come and about my children, it's my sleep*

We can see that keeping busy was as vital for Dansitu's well-being and mental health as it was for Pam's, despite their different situations of family and immigration status. Dansitu had the stability of Leave to Remain and the right to

work, but that did not make the transition to life as a refugee mother, wife, worker, and woman in Wales an easy experience. She explained that she had "more confidence" from going to work every day as the alternative, to her, was to "stay home" and risk depression. So, she preferred a life where she was either busy working, caring for her children, or asleep. Dansitu's pride in her job is evident in her smile in the unedited photograph for the image above. When she faced a lack of self-confidence and barriers that negatively impacted her self-confidence, her employment and workplace became a layer of resilience (Obrist et al. 2010).

That pride and resilience supported Dansitu through the Covid-19 pandemic. The text she sent me with the image above was a statement of pride about her key worker role. She was very proud of her job and its importance to her community and Welsh/British society during a global health crisis. Dansitu had developed a sense of belonging through participation in a common goal. Her job has created social and economic value for her and the local community. Her husband took on more duties at home while Dansitu continued her front-line work.  When the family was together at home, they created shared joy, such as caring for a small, injured bird. Dansitu's photographs reflected the combination of simple, happy moments in the domestic space and vital work for society in a public space, with one supporting the other. Her limited symbolic capital of refugee status has enabled her to have (limited) choices and create a life she is proud of and wishes to share with me. In doing so, she has also created a life in Wales in which she is a 'good' migrant and refugee, mother, and citizen.

## 5.6  SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I have presented my interpretation of narratives from four women whose experiences are connected only by immigration status and motherhood. I have demonstrated how social resilience is necessary for the various transitions experienced by sanctuary seekers in Wales.  Those transitions are, for example, shown with Sarah's shifts from economic migrant and spouse to single mother and asylum seeker. At times in their transitions, my participations face the issues of the intersectional social reproduction of marginalisation that authors such as Bhattacharyya (2018) discuss in relation to migrant women. These issues come in times of exclusion due to challenges of motherhood, language, and immigration status. I highlighted some significant ways in which learning can be seen as a social phenomenon that can either hinder or help the development of social resilience. Those contrasting impacts are shown through Pam's experiences of isolation and uncertainty and the role of social learning in supporting her mental health.  I also demonstrated that the social categorisation of 'asylum seekers and refugees' conceals significant differences in experiences and perspectives. Dansitu's early experiences, for example, are quite different from those of both Irene and Pam, as she arrived with 'Leave to Remain' status. Yet the intersections of immigration status and motherhood also bring significant similarities to the women's experiences. These four narratives highlight the nuances I found in my experiential data, some of which I will explore further in the following two chapters. I will first highlight these key differences and similarities between Sarah, Irene, Pam, and Dansitu's experiences.

My analysis found that the experiences of learning were wide and varied. Formal education through educational institutions or classes for qualifications played a role for Sarah, Irene, and Dansitu. For Irene and Dansitu, the common denominator in formal learning was ESOL classes, with mixed experiences of marginalisation and inclusion. Sarah has also studied for a postgraduate qualification, and Dansitu hopes to study for an undergraduate degree once she has the required ESOL qualification. The women saw formal education as a route to a career and building a secure future, but entry criteria and childcare needs were barriers for them. These experiences support findings in the existing literature on the value placed on formal education over informal learning (Morrice 2013a; Klenk 2017; Oliver and Hughes 2018a)

All four women emphasised the importance of their social communities. In their descriptions of experiences in community spaces, I found supportive, perhaps empowering, social learning was taking place. For example, it was through community social learning that Sarah could build social resilience to enrol in a postgraduate course in a field that had been new to her. Through those spaces, she formed the social resilience that enabled her to find employment. Pam, for example, built a social network that was her source of survival. I felt that I could most clearly see social learning as a social process of community engagement and participation (Wenger 2018).

It was evident that the women valued their social networks as lifelines. The size of those networks was not as significant as those networks' roles. I found that the women were learning in social spaces – in communities of practice. In these

social learning spaces, the mothers found support for their transitions into their new lives in Welsh communities. Through that social support, they developed social resilience for their challenges. Sarah lifted herself and her self-confidence back off the floor through her social learning spaces, which included short courses and the support and encouragement of others. Irene has been developing her English skills, a sense of purpose, and a new identity through her social learning spaces and volunteering. She turned to crafting and learning in the natural environment during the isolation of lockdown. Pam has found a support system of people for survival and for keeping herself well mentally, maintaining those connections through worship and volunteering during lockdowns. Dansitu has experienced social learning in places of employment and has also developed her English skills and confidence through success at work and her vital contribution during the Covid-19 pandemic. All four women have found, built, and solidified some minimal forms of capital through and in those social learning spaces, whether social, cultural, or economic. Direct economic capital development is only possible when the state has conferred the symbolic capital that comes with Leave to Remain.

All four women have faced challenges and hardships since arriving in Wales, including the denial of fundamental human rights, intimate partner violence, long-term separation from children, a loss of identity and self, and the loss of a previous life. They have faced obstacles and barriers, including legal restrictions on fundamental rights, exclusionary practices in classrooms or educational institutions, and a lack of recognition of pre-existing skills and experience. Those obstacles come from socio-legal misrecognition as part of a hostile and coercive system that harms mothers and children (Shobiye and Parker 2022). Yet through community (and

education) social learning spaces, they have developed social resilience to the layers of harm they face. Interestingly, the four women provided visual representations of their experiences, a mixture of depictions of themselves alone and with others (family or friends). That mixed and nuanced presentation reflects, to me, two things. Firstly, the women communicated about themselves as individuals, not just mothers—secondly, the juxtaposition of the imposed isolation and loneliness that remains despite grassroots, community support. Social learning spaces in Wales may play a role in social resilience, but they do not negate the coercive harms of the UK's immigration and asylum systems. In the next chapter, I will further return to the misrecognition versus recognition concept. Then, in Chapter 7, I discuss the positive role social learning played for my participants as they sought sanctuary in Wales.

# 6  MISRECOGNITION, MISINFORMATION, AND WELL-BEING

*"…women don't struggle with physical things. We need help on the practical side. They don't need free diapers!" Munira*

## 6.1  INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I address the research question(s):

*"How do mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales experience and perceive the impacts of barriers to learning?"*

I have taken a thematic narrative approach to answering this question in my analysis. I explore the emotional, social, psychological, physical, and financial well-being impacts of misrecognition and misinformation with learning. Firstly, I discuss the effects on emotional well-being with Ira's story of isolation. Secondly, I explore social well-being with Gabina and Webet's barriers to accessing ESOL classes and Marcia's exclusion from local voluntary work. Thirdly, I discuss psychological impacts by returning to Sarah's story (previously discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.2) and further exploring Gabina and Webet's experiences. Fourthly, I explore physical-wellbeing with Lucia's story of difficulties that can exacerbate trauma-based physical symptoms. Finally, I explore the financial challenges faced to fund education, as shared by Sanni and Munira. I finish the chapter with a summary discussion that emphasises structural issues and the interwoven nature of different areas of individual well-being.

When analysing my data, I used Fraser's definition of 'recognition' as " participatory parity" (2007, p.32) and the lack of that parity stemming from a misrecognition of women's capabilities and capacity. I view my participants'

experiences as forms of intersectional social and cultural misrecognition.  My

definition of misrecognition includes a lack of recognition or active denial of

recognition, which prevents parity of participation in local communities and Welsh

society. Misrecognition may lead to misinformation. For example, my participant Ira

is repeatedly given information about ESOL classes when she has a UK

undergraduate degree and would like to study at postgraduate level (see Section

6.2).  Misinformation may also contribute to misrecognition. For example, the false

constructions of sanctuary-seeking mothers discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.3

(Gendered Asylum systems) may contribute to the women's experiences, most

obviously Munira's experiences in Section 6.6. I define misinformation as providing

inadequate, inappropriate, or inaccurate information. In my definition, misinformation

may be a deliberate act (disinformation), a reflection of constructions of individual,

societal, and systemic cultural valuations, or both (Ruokolainen and Widén 2020;

Furegon 2022). I include disinformation as a subset of misinformation because my

research focuses on my participant's perceptions (Carlson et al. 2018). So, I do not

presume others' intent  (Ruokolainen and Widén 2020).

As in my previous chapter, I represent my participants' experiences using the

communication mode that each woman emphasised or chose. Therefore, there is

greater inclusion of verbal data for some women (for example, Ira) and more use of

visual data for others (for example, Lucia). I finish my introduction with an overview,

using the visual and digital formats created with input from some of the women.

To watch and listen to a multimodal overview combining mothers' images and words, please click on or scan the QR Code below. As discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.6, it was essential for me to ensure that I have represented both my participants and the collaborative nature of my research. Therefore, those core aspects of my work remain centred.

**Image 23 – Well-being Impacts: Digital Overview**

## 6.1.1 VISUAL AND DIGITAL REPRESENTATIONS

**Image 24 - Well-Being Impacts Visual Overview**

The storyboard below is a visual storyboard representing the well-being impacts of misrecognition and misinformation.
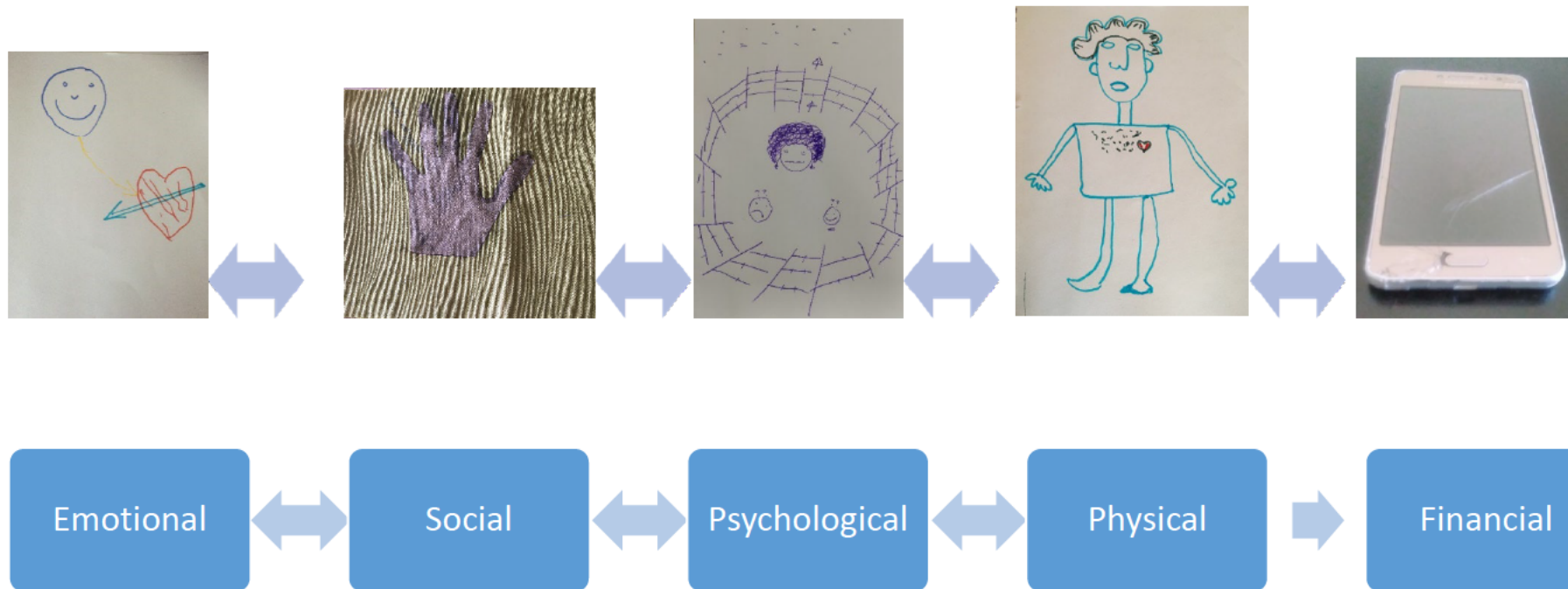
## 6.2  SOCIAL WELL-BEING

In this section, I discuss exclusion and isolation in the context of physical exclusionary practices and misinformation impacting social well-being. I explore the relationship between misrecognition and misinformation, formal community learning, and social and cultural capital concepts. In the following Section (6.2), I explore the marginalising effects on personal relationships and emotional well-being resulting from the social isolation that misrecognition and misinformation can cause.

All my participants talked about social isolation. This sense of isolation was reflected in the verbal and visual data generated. Aamira, for example, talked to me about other women she had considered friends who had given her misinformation when she asked them for help, a subject some of the other women raised too. She explained, "*some people doesn't like give good information because you go up or you go on better*". Most participants, however, talked of misinformation that seemed more systemic or institutional than disinformation from individuals.

I found the woman often talked of misrecognition and misinformation that initially seemed to be a source of support.  Gabina's textile, shown in the images below, from a craft group illustrates that duality. Gabina suggested that the textile she had made reflected the barriers she faced:

**Image 25 – Gabina: Hand**



When Gabina showed me this textile, she wanted me to say what I saw, as she said it could be viewed in two ways. I told her that the hand could be either a ' stop' or 'help' gesture, depending on the way up it was placed. She said that was how she wanted me to view it (but of course, I cannot know that for sure, so this is a case where my interpretation may be foregrounded). Gestures of support are initially open to interpretation and may not be what they first seem. Transformative education can arguably be an example of exclusion masquerading as support. Morrice (2013a) convincingly argues that transformative learning has a "darker", exclusionary side as it can require individuals to unlearn who they are and face discrimination.  Several women in my research experienced harmful misrecognition, misinformation, or both directly within more formal structures of community learning, such as voluntary work, which is where I will now focus.

Legal exclusion from employment led many of my participants to try to undertake voluntary work. Volunteering opportunities in a local community provide sanctuary-seeking mothers' with the potential to build social and cultural capital, as shown through Morrice's (2007) work in England.  However, as O'Neill (2022) has argued, there can be tension in community connections for asylum seekers. For

some of my participants, volunteering was a positive experience. For others, the experiences involved exclusion and even exploitation. I heard of different experiences across different parts of Wales, with women in South Wales able to access volunteering opportunities far more easily than those in other parts of Wales. Pam has had no problems finding a range of voluntary opportunities; her issue was exploitation in those roles. One mother[51] talked to me about having a DBS check and volunteering at her children's school. However, some women found they were refused voluntary roles when asked for them.

Marcia explained to me the issues she had faced. Marcia is a very experienced healthcare specialist. Her children are old enough that she does not need childcare. Marcia would have liked to use her skills following her arrival in Wales but was also keen to offer her labour for any opportunity. She wanted something that would keep her busy and help her interact with others. However, Marcia faced obstacles everywhere she turned, except for an unpaid 'internship' on a project run by a charity's office in South Wales. In the extract below, Marcia explained the issues she faced.

**Extract 9 – Marcia: Volunteering Barriers**

> Marcia: *And my other complaint is, for example, I would love to do some volunteer work, not paid work, but I can't be a formal volunteer because we have to undergo DBS checks, and asylum seekers can't...*
>
> Laura: *You have… have…*
>
> Marcia: *you can't! So why not, you know? You can't find out who you are if you've got criminal records or whatever.*

---

[51] I have not named the mother here to minimise the risk of identification

*Laura: So, you can't do voluntary work in [name of location]?*

*Marcia: No. You can come here and do something, but you are not formally a volunteer. There is an agency here. There is an agency. They have plenty of jobs, everything you would like to do, work with kids – kids with special needs – I don't know, take care of the elderly people you cannot. You can't do it. Because they have to do the DBS check, and you cannot be in the court the DBS check. So, we are like, we have our hands tied up. So...*

*Laura: Yes, yeah – is there a voluntary work that you can do that doesn't require a DBS check?*

*Marcia: No, all of them! Because I've been everywhere, and you need...*

*Laura: Oh, that's interesting!*

*Marcia: Organisations say, the families say the children.... even though here I gave my papers to the lady in charge, she said, 'No, you cannot, you can come here and give us a hand, but you cannot be a volunteer'.*

Marcia has experienced the outright rejection of her offers of labour and skills because asylum seekers cannot get checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) – a criminal records check. However, there is explicit information published by the UK Government (2021) that explains the process for getting a DBS check for asylum seekers and refugees. Further sources provide details on the process specifically for organisations wanting to recruit asylum seekers as volunteers, such as the Volunteer Centre Sheffield's detailed guidance (2023). Even though information on the processes for getting DBS checks for asylum seekers is publicly available, Marcia was rejected for relevant opportunities through misinformation.

Due to the identification requirements, getting a DBS check may be more problematic for an asylum seeker. However, problematic does not mean impossible or illegal; such a check is unnecessary for much voluntary work. Voluntary Services in other parts of Wales, for example, Swansea, make it clear that asylum seekers

can and should be considered for roles that do not require DBS checks (Swansea Council for Voluntary Service 2017). Most of my participants, in different regions of Wales from Marcia, had volunteering experience. Marcia had identification, proof of her qualifications, and other required papers, and she even provided her documents to one organisation. Yet she was still told she couldn't volunteer. Marcia was given misinformation.

Marcia believed what she was told about volunteering because that information came from organisations and charities that hire volunteers. The organisations giving her this misinformation included those who work to support sanctuary seekers. She was given the same misinformation everywhere she asked, so she had no reason to disbelieve it. Therefore, women seeking asylum face inequity and inequality of opportunity, depending on where they live in Wales. Marcia was given misinformation about legal restrictions from organisations whose remit includes advising and supporting asylum seekers. For me, Marcia's experiences show misrecognition of the limited rights asylum seekers have, resulting in misinformation. In turn, misinformation led to additional marginalisation and social exclusion for Marcia, stemming from refugee support communities.  Voluntary work is a form of social learning – community participation and engagement for mutual benefit (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). Marcia was excluded from a vital opportunity for social learning, which could build a sense of belonging and her social and cultural capital.

However, access to voluntary work does not necessarily lead to inclusion. When it is exclusionary, it is not social learning. Pam, whose story I discussed in the previous chapter, has done various voluntary roles. She has had mixed experiences,

which included a clear case of exploitation. Pam had run a small business in her home country. One voluntary role should have provided her with additional business skills in Wales. Yet that is not what happened. Pam explained, "*promised me that they are going to teach you as well to work on till*". Yet, instead, she was expected to do only the hot and physically demanding job of steaming fabrics/textiles[52]. She found that week after week, "*all the time*", she was expected to do the steaming for her whole shift. She did not mind doing the steaming work as part of her duties but not as her sole task when promised other experience. Whenever she asked about the promises for her to learn to work the till, she would be promised again it would happen. It never did.

**Extract 10 – Pam: Physical Exclusion**

> *Pam: You can find three people, four people sitting on the till talking, chatting. You all the time. I did that one for eight months.*
>
> *Laura: Yeah*
>
> *Pam: She said, "Why?" all the time; she tell me the same thing. Ah, no! And you know steaming is not easy!*
>
> *Laura: No!*
>
> *Pam: Ah, no! And you know steaming is not easy!*
>
> *Pam: You feel warm! Your hands, you can't hold them, yeah, oh, it's a [ pause]. I said, "No!" … That is what I was doing, steaming, doing putting the books on shelves, doing that, but the way they told me, and even that's what when you go, they give you, um, a form, you sign and what you are going to do exactly. But I didn't do that. I said, "alright, I'm going."*

---

[52] I do not specify exactly what Pam was steaming to try to maintain her anonyminity

Pam's description of this voluntary experience is, to me, one of 'othering' and exploitation in what should have been a social learning space. Pam was treated as an outsider who could be used to do the physically demanding work. Pam's story supports existing findings on asylum seekers' survival experiences (Crawley et al. 2011). The staff never taught Pam the till work, despite promises. Instead, she was given all the steaming work on her shifts. Pam talked of her exclusion from the group social interaction, the "*chatting*" on the shop floor by the till. According to Pam, work was not shared equally or equitably, with everyone present colluding d with her maltreatment. Pam explained that she had repeatedly asked about the promise made to her about training and the signed forms. Yet each time, the promise was repeated and never fulfilled. From Pam's perspective, therefore, her exclusion and the broken promises were deliberate acts. Pam seemed to describe acts of exploitation and disinformation (as a form of misinformation) because she was not seen as an equal.

Pam described the physical impact of this experience to me. She was left steaming for so many consecutive hours that it affected her use of her hands each time, despite the presence of other workers. She said: "*You feel warm! Your hands, you can't hold them*".  The person in charge of her duties restricted a displaced racialised woman to the manual labour of steaming and shelf stacking rather than distributing tasks equally (Sayer 2007). While Pam did the hard, physical work, her 'colleagues' could sit and talk together.  In my interpretation, she was seen as not just an outsider but also as of 'lesser' value as a human (Fraser 1998; Lister 2007; Sayer 2007). Pam is a victim of the construction of a social hierarchy placing asylum seekers at the bottom (Bassel 2012; Anderson 2013; Bennett 2018). The UK Home

Office has created an environment where an organisation thought they could treat Pam differently from everyone else in that space, regardless of the physical or emotional impact on her. The voluntary work should have been a learning opportunity for Pam, a place of social inclusion. Instead, she was 'othered' and exploited and directly physically harmed. I could have included Pam's experiences in Section 6.5, showing how connected the impacts on well-being are.

## 6.3  EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Social isolation is not just about physical exclusion. Sometimes, my participants were physically present in social communities, but their inclusion was superficial and hid a layer of marginalisation. That marginalisation stemmed from misrecognition, leading to misinformation. The emotional impact was central in ways Ira's experiences demonstrate clearly.

Ira was a mother who spent much time with her children within refugee support communities yet described experiences of emotional isolation.  She is well-educated (British honours degree), skilled, professional, yet she is overlooked by the organisations and communities supporting sanctuary seekers. She told me, "*They emphasise only on those who can't speak. They forgot about those, means, once you know English, they just you off and go.*"  Her sense of isolation seemed to stem from misrecognition within refugee support communities of her needs and capabilities, which I discuss now.

Ira's history within the UK is an essential context for understanding the misrecognition she experiences and its impact. She initially arrived in the UK on a student visa. She later claimed asylum as she could not return to her home country

and live there safely. Her experiences of changes in immigration status highlight the systemic stripping of social and symbolic capital from individuals. Ira was stripped of recognition of her skills and experience and prevented from full participation in the community. I will now discuss those experiences, starting with the context of Ira's changing immigration status.

Ira lived in the UK for several years before we first met. She had come to the UK on a student visa as a voluntary migrant. She had earned a degree from a British university. When Ira graduated, she found employment in the NHS and secured a work visa. She married (to another voluntary migrant), started a family and lived a settled life in England for years. Then, the Home Office rejected their visa renewal applications, which Ira had not expected. Initially, Ira and her husband tried to secure more work and get sponsored visas, but that did not work. Their home countries were now unsafe for them. They had been able to secure visas when they first left and had not envisaged that would later become a problem. They could not return home safely, so they claimed asylum when they could not secure new work visas. Their asylum claim changed their immigration status and deprived them of social and symbolic capital. They were now seen as 'sanctuary-seekers' or sanctuary seekers, no longer voluntary migrants due to the hierarchical asylum and immigration legislation.

The family was dispersed from England to Wales. They were moved away from their support networks and the life they had built. However, the stigma of being asylum seekers, which is strong in their diasporic communities, meant they have had to reduce all contact with their social network, leaving them very isolated from all social and emotional ties. When we met, Ira's most recent claim for asylum had been

rejected. She was excluded from employment by the asylum system, so she wanted to use her time for further study at postgraduate level.

For me, Ira's story reflected the complexities and tensions in the asylum-community nexus that O'Neill (2022) has discussed. The systemic issues directly impacted Ira's everyday life, which is essential to understand when interpreting her experiences. Her change in immigration status deprived her of recognition as an educated, skilled professional and her social networks. She talked to me about the impact on her emotional state.  Ira has tried making new friends and a new life in Wales, regularly going to groups for herself and her children. Yet she told me she has "*no friends*". Ira believes that being able to study or work would help her make new friends: "*If I go study further or in the work, maybe I have more friends, I think*", but she cannot find a way forward to do so. Ira was only offered practical support for ESOL classes that she does not need and socially struggles in community spaces due to language barriers. She explained this was because  "*because the people coming from other backgrounds, they are not good in English.*" Ira had yet to find a space that could genuinely support an educated asylum-seeking mother to move forward in education, as she explains in the extract below.

**Extract 11 – Ira: Are you going to English class?**

> Ira: So, their main emphasis is English; they don't provide any advice for those who are education or who want to do more.
>
> Laura: So that's a bit of a gap, really?
>
> Ira: It's a gap; it's so sad. They emphasise only on those who can't speak. They forgot about those, means, once you know English, they just you off and go.
>
> Laura: Yes, I've noticed that. It's part of the reason I'm doing this project because I think that gets forgotten.

*Ira: If, there, if means, [charity] are a big one here. They give ESOL and everything like this – speaking, dancing, everything they do here. But there is nothing for me at the moment. If I come here, they ask, "When are you going to English class?" [shrugs and laughs]*

*Laura: Yes*

*Ira: Means, it's not feeling that's bad. It's their job to ask.*

*Laura: Yes*

*Ira: Means, then they ask, "why you not going to English class?" I say, no, I don't. I have to go to the library. I have done that like three times. [sighs]*

*Laura: You don't need that anymore!*

*Ira: I'm happy, but I want it that there is someone in these organisations, too, who can help people with the mental health. This means, that if someone has already studied and they want to study more.*

*Laura: More, yeah*

*Ira: I mean, if they can find someone who wants to do this.*

Ira has found that organisations specifically supporting sanctuary seekers cannot help her with her learning needs and goals. Ira states that "*their main emphasis is English; they don't provide any advice for those who are education or who want to do more*". Additionally, she expresses a sense of being overlooked when she says: "*They forgot about those, means, once you know English they just you off and go*". Ira seemed to describe a sense of invisibility. Her invisibility reflects misrecognition that leads to misinformation. She was once recognised as educated and employed in a professional role. She receives offers of ESOL classes, yet no information on how to pursue postgraduate studies, which is what she would like. This mismatch of information to the individual is misrecognition, leading to misinformation. Her status as an asylum seeker erases Ira's educational background and past work experience.

Yet the level of misrecognition goes beyond a general organisational prioritisation of basic needs. Ira has been a regular visitor to the centre for many months. Yet she is repeatedly asked if she is attending the English class and is expected to justify her reason for not going. The staff have not seen Ira for who she is.

Using Fraser's conceptual framing (1998; 2007), I see these experiences as a lack of recognition. Even in a specific place of support for sanctuary seekers, Ira's capacity to participate in society or the local community (and on par with Welsh or non-sanctuary-seeking residents) is not recognised. I consider Ira's experience a potential indication in Wales that there is a strategizing of reductive vulnerability for funding within or by the third sector. Mesarič and Vachelli (2019) have argued that such strategizing happens in England, with practitioners using perceived weakness and passivity in the vulnerability of women seeking sanctuary to secure resources.

Societal and institutional emphasis on sanctuary-seeking mothers' vulnerability and basic needs plays a part in perpetuating marginalising and has an emotional toll on women like Ira. Ira would like to see support "if someone has already studied and wants *to study more"*. Ira links such support with accessing formal education as help "*with the mental health",* indicating the negative impact on her of the exclusion and isolation she experiences. Ira directly links educational exclusion and mental health, just as Sarah did in Chapter 5, Section 5.2. I discuss this connection further in Section 6.4 with Olena's experiences. In Ira's words, I see a sense of isolation that has taken an emotional toll on her. Ira spends time in the refugee community groups, but she states, "*There is nothing for me*" in such spaces. She has not made connections through shared experiences or a mutual purpose that

one might find in the shared spaces of belonging and value creation of united

communities or social learning (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). She

cannot build her social and cultural capital in this space and is denied recognition of

her capabilities. Her resulting sense of isolation and the emotional impact were

strong throughout the interview.

**Extract 12 – Ira: Isolation**

> *I won't say, means,...it's fine, if you, means, then also you go in these some of
> people can't don't speak English, some can't speak my language. So, it's still
> a language barrier between us. You can't all the time speak to the person who
> is organising it because he or she already have lots of responsibility within
> that group so. It's fine; sit there quietly, watch kids, that's it.*

> *I have forgot how a friend would treat you, how it's, how it means, how it should
> be having a friend. I have forgot now. There are families come here, we come
> 'hello, how are, kids fine' that's it.*

Ira has access to community groups to socialise with other mothers.

However, she has not been able to use physical access and presence to develop a

social network. Ira faces social and linguistic barriers in that space, leaving her even

more isolated. In the extract above, she described how she could not form

friendships with other group mothers because some "*don't speak English".* (They are

the people to whom the services are targeted), Also, "*some don't speak my*

*language*". So, there is "*a language barrier between us*". Ira has not been able to

overcome that language barrier, as she continued to explain that she has no friends.

There is no language barrier with staff in organisations/groups. However, she cannot

befriend them because they are busy and "*have lots of responsibility*" to all the

service users. This ongoing, unchanging situation for Ira is that she has been so emotionally isolated for so long that she has forgotten what it is like to have a friend.

Existing literature (Ameen 2007; Crawley and Crimes 2009b) suggests that many sanctuary seekers have high levels of education, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.5.  My fieldnotes from June to December 2019 include summaries of conversations with sanctuary seekers, men and women who expressed similar perceptions to Ira. Some refugee community spaces seemed to offer little beyond support for basic physical needs (food) and ESOL learning. There was little for those who wanted other needs met, such as support accessing higher education. Sanctuary-seekers (particularly the women) with those needs did not use the groups as much as they might. For Ira, it is at least a space where her children can play and eat.  She attends the groups for them. She is a sanctuary seeker present in groups, wanting support, but she does not get what she needs, leaving her with limited social interaction and emotionally isolated.

Ira's experiences show that community organisations are not always the sources of social integration and lifelong learning depicted in Morrice's work (2007). For Ira, the local refugee support communities are not spaces of mutual engagement nor parity of participation (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). The support communities have not aided her in moving towards parity or equality in the wider community in the areas she seeks to engage. For Ira, there is a lack of appropriate information and resources in refugee communities to aid her. Ira is excluded from social participation and emotional engagement in a space that should provide those opportunities.

## 6.4  PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

In this section, I briefly discuss the impact of learning exclusion and isolation on sanctuary seekers' psychological well-being and mental health. I found almost all my participants made this connection. Mental health conditions such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Complex PTSD (CPTSD), anxiety and depression are prevalent among the asylum-seeking and refugee population, both nationally and internationally (Bäärnhielm et al. 2017). In the UK, some literature highlights factors within the asylum system that cause and exacerbate mental health and psychological problems by heightening isolation and uncertainty (Baranik et al. 2018; Reehal et al. 2019; Phillimore and Cheung 2021). Existing literature also extensively explores the beneficial connection between education and social inclusion for sanctuary seekers, as discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4 and again in my next Chapter (7). Here, I focus on the harms of marginalisation and exclusion stemming from misrecognition and misinformation. Sarah's story in Chapter 5, Section 5.2, clearly encapsulates some of the critical psychological harms inflicted by misrecognition and resulting misinformation. Her first drawing with me illustrates the nature of the harms so well that I include it again here as a reminder.

**Image 26 – Sarah: Psychological Detention**

Sarah depicted a metaphorical detention centre, representing the asylum system. She showed herself, and her childcare trapped her psychologically and isolated her socially. They could only hurt themselves if they tried to escape. Despite such explicit imagery from Sarah, little existing literature explores experiences as Sarah shows them.  My participants explicitly connected learning, psychological well-being, and mental health. My participants said that the inaccessibility of education negatively affected their mental health. For some, this was their biggest issue (perhaps even more significant than the impact of employment opportunities). I will now discuss parts of my conversations with Gabina, Webet, and Olena to illustrate the negative impacts that marginalisation and exclusion from learning have on their mental health.

I talked with Gabina and her friend Webet together. They discussed their desire to learn more English and exclusion from formal classes. They described exclusion from formal education as due to the known barriers of childcare and transport (Bloch 2002a; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). They talked about the

psychological impacts of those tangible barriers, an area that the existing literature does not explore much yet.

Gabina lives as a single mother in the UK. She lives in a different country from her husband due to immigration rules. Her husband has an immigration visa for another country. Gabina, however, has not been granted permission to enter that country. Her husband is trying to bring his family to join him through spousal visas and family reunion routes. Simultaneously, she has claimed asylum in the UK to have a safe place to live, regardless of the outcome of her husband's applications. Their home country is not safe. The outcomes for each claim were still uncertain when Gabina and I spoke.  Webet is married with a very young child/infant and was claiming asylum with her husband. Webet and Gabina met and became friends in Wales; they have different countries of origin. Webet expressed a lack of opportunity for formal studying, while Gabina talked about the impact of being excluded from classes as a mother. The impact on which they focused was the effect on their mental health.

**Extract 13 - Gabina and Webet:  Depression**

> *Webet: Yeah, my husband. My husband don't going for the college*
> *Gabina: Does*
> *Laura: He's goes to college?*
> *Webet: Now he's in college*
> *Laura: He's in college. What's he studying?*
> *Gabina: Yes, because he have a cycle. That's why*
> *Laura: Ahhhh*
> *Gabina: We don't have bicycle - gestures to children*
> *Laura: [laughs]*
> *Gabina: I don't know*

*Laura: You can't cycle with the child. So what does he study?*

*Webet: Study for only language*

*Laura: Language? English?*

*Webet: Yeah. English term*

*Laura: And you, would you like to study English or something else?*

*Webet: I like study but with children...*

*Laura: Yeah*

*Webet: Go for only 2 hour go for school and after I for bring.*

*Laura: Yeah*

*Webet: Because my husband is full-time.*

*Laura: Yeah. So, there's no childcare for you to study English*

*Gabina: No. We stay home, like boring. Depression.*

*Laura: Yeah, very depressing, I'd imagine.*

*Gabina: When you home, feel depression coming. Think this one thing. Just thinking.*

In the exchange above,, we can see that Gabina and Webet directly connect exclusion from education and depression. Their reasons for exclusion from ESOL classes are consistent with existing literature – primarily barriers of transport and childcare (Bloch 2002a; Crawley and Crimes 2009b; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). We also see the gendered nature of that exclusion. Webet's husband can attend classes using a bicycle, but Webet and Gabina do not see that as an option as mothers of young children. Gabina is parenting alone in the UK, and has sole responsibility for caring for her children. Webet is the primary carer for their very young child. Her day is restricted by nursery school hours – her child is only in nursery school for "*two hour*" and is with Webet for the rest of the day. Her husband, however, can study "full-time". Webet does not explain the reason for the division of labour in her family. However, wider discussions with the women in this group (field notes September and October 2019) revealed that this is a choice that many families

make when their children are very young. This is because it is not possible for both parents to study full-time and the course timetable is not flexible enough for both to study part-time. So, parents may take it in turns to study English, with the father going first when the children are very young. That leaves mothers of young children excluded from a key source of learning and social interaction.

We can see how significant this impact is on mental health in Gabina's answer to my question about the lack of childcare. Her response was not about her language skills, job opportunities, or similar issues. She immediately responded with the issue of being isolated, forced to "*stay home*" and a key single-word statement: "*depression*". Without the option of formal classes, Gabina and Webet do not have an obvious reason to leave the house regularly for an activity that keeps their minds busy. When they are at home too much, they have too much time and space; they are left "just thinking" with no distractions or alternatives for their thoughts. In Gabina's words, I can see that the isolation and lack of mental stimulation led to "*depression coming*". It seems that their perspective is that they are deprived of crucial options for managing their mental health and staying well.

Olena talked to me in depth about her mental health and trauma symptoms. She was very explicit, even more so than Gabina, about the role learning could and has played in her mental health. Here, I explore the bordering of education as a form of misrecognition of potential students like Olena. I discuss the negative impacts such bordering, as conceptualised by Oliver and Hughes (2018b) and Yuval-Davis et al. (2018), had on Olena's mental health.

Olena's sense of identity is very much connected with her professional life; she worked in education before the war broke out in her home country. She is also a wife and mother. She spent her first few months in the UK suffering from trauma and depression, which she talked to me about. She had lost her home and professional identity and could not function fully as an individual person or mother. During that time, she "*cried, cried and cried non-stop for 24 hours.*" and "*I couldn't do anything. I couldn't function for one year*". Olena explained that she was given mental health support, but *"It was not really support for me*". Olena continued to struggle mentally and emotionally until she started studying in Wales. "*I just used this studies like this, is like a medicine"*. I discuss the healing effects of education for Olena in the next Chapter (7).

However, her time in education was not simple. In the extract below, Olena talked about the impact of starting a course and having the opportunity snatched away. She was ejected from the course due to an institutional issue with her status as an asylum seeker. She was enrolled on the course without problems and even awarded a scholarship as an asylum seeker. Yet, after less than one term/semester, she was forced to leave and told she was not allowed to study with the institution or enter the university buildings. This incident happened due to her immigration status. In the extract below, she describes how the unexpected expulsion impacted her.

**Extract 14 – Olena: Sense of pointlessness**

> Olena: *Imagine! And then I stayed two months in bed. I didn't talk to anyone. I was... I didn't know what to do. For two months. It was terrible. And I said 'never, ever, I'd better just join the gang of I don't know what? What is the point?'*

Olena's description is one of trauma, as she explained in other parts of our interview. Her ejection from university caused her mental health issues to regress.

She describes a period when she could not get out of bed and function again. Her words suggest that she could not see what action she could take or what she should do. She had lost hope, and her words convey a sense of helplessness: she says she felt she might as well join a "*gang"* and asks: "*What is the point?"*. Olena's right to study in Wales was misrecognised through educational bordering (Oliver and Hughes 2018a), with severe consequences for Olena's well-being. The experience made her feel treated like a criminal, someone who might as well "*just join the gang of I don't know what*". She felt seen and treated as a harmful presence in society. Yet, this was not the only occasion Olena experienced expulsion from education due to her immigration status.

Olena later started studying at a different university. The university consistently supported her this time, but a Home Office decision on her rights to access education meant that she was temporarily suspended from the course.[53] The Home Office wrote to Olena and told her that she was "*banned"* from studying." This second university had to suspend her place, but staff worked with her solicitor "*fighting for me"*. Yet, this set-back once again impacted Olena's mental health.

**Extract 15 – Olena: Feeling Punished**

> *At that time, I couldn't even get up from the bed. I was done in with all this injustice. I'm not committing crime! I came to ask for help. I came to ask for*

---

[53] There are several reasons why a sanctuary seeker might not be allowed access education, and these have changed over the past few years. I have not given Olena's specific reasons to maintain her anonymity, but possibly reasons generally include Leave to Remain expiring, complete refusal of an asylum claim, or ineligibility based on length of time in the UK. Further information is available through the tables in Appendix 10.3

*safety. And I'm showing you my real story, but you, you accept me as a criminal, and then you punish me with the studies and stop me.*

Olena sank into depression again, but this time with different feelings. Once again, she could not get out of bed or function. In the extract above, she is more explicit about being treated like a criminal: "*I'm not committing crime! I came to ask for help." H*er words about this episode show a sense of injustice rather than the pointlessness and helplessness of Extract 14. Here, Olena talks of being "*done"* with her difficulties. She places more emphasis on the fact she needs "*safety*". Her words reflect the Home Office rhetoric of "illegal immigration" (Home Office 2021; Patel 2021). Such rhetoric creates an image of asylum seekers as criminals to be rejected, deported and deterred, not 'legitimate' refugees "in genuine need of protection" (Cameron 2013; Home Office 2021, p.3). Of course, this rhetoric and its ideology have strengthened since I interviewed Olena. The Illegal Immigration Bill is an explicit attempt to criminalise spontaneously seeking asylum in the UK in a way that breaks International Laws (UNHCR 2023). In the current climate, Olena's words are even more significant.

Olena's sense of injustice stems from sharing her "*real story"* yet still facing what feels like punishment for being a victim of war. To Olena, stopping her from studying is a punitive measure inflicted on a woman who has asked for nothing but help and safety. The unexpected prohibition on studying took the one thing helping her mental health. Her trauma is exacerbated by the obstacles she faces trying to help herself. I would argue that the Home Office has used the education system in its 'weaponisation' (Webber 2019) of a hostile immigration environment. The impact of such an approach is to re-traumatise women such as Olena.

## 6.5  PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

A few of the women talked to me about physical health problems, making direct connections between their learning and other forms of well-being. Mona, for example, has a chronic health condition that significantly affects her mobility. Her condition impacted her life more in the UK than previously due to her lack of funds for public transport or a car. Yet, learning English was a priority for her, so she attended classes. The resulting pain from travelling on the bus meant she had to restrict her movements at other times, affecting how often she could do basic things such as go to the supermarket. In Section 6.4 above, Pam described physical exploitation and its psychological and physical impacts. Other women talked of physical symptoms such as malaise, fatigue, and headaches eased by learning or exacerbated when excluded from spaces.

Lucia was a mother who focused on her physical health when we spoke. She described physical symptoms exacerbated by her emotional state, possibly trauma-related physical health problems. She talked about the relationship between her health (physical, emotional, and mental) and her need to learn English (to feel safe communicating with others).

Lucia was the one mother in my research who had had little formal education before she arrived in Wales; she had not finished primary school. She was also a single mother who had experienced much trauma throughout her life, starting in early childhood. She arrived in Wales as, perhaps, the mother who most closely met the 'suffering and worthy victim' of public perceptions (Seu 2003; Georgiou and Zaborowski 2017). Lucia explained to me the impact of her trauma was such that

she arrived too scared to speak to others. Lucia's experiences had taught her that talking to people was so dangerous it could result in a person being killed. Yet she also needed to learn English and communicate to meet her and her children's basic needs for food, healthcare, etc. According to Lucia, the internal conflict between her fears and her survival needs exacerbated her physical symptoms of trauma, which she chose to depict in her drawing below.

**Image 27 – Lucia: Physical Health**
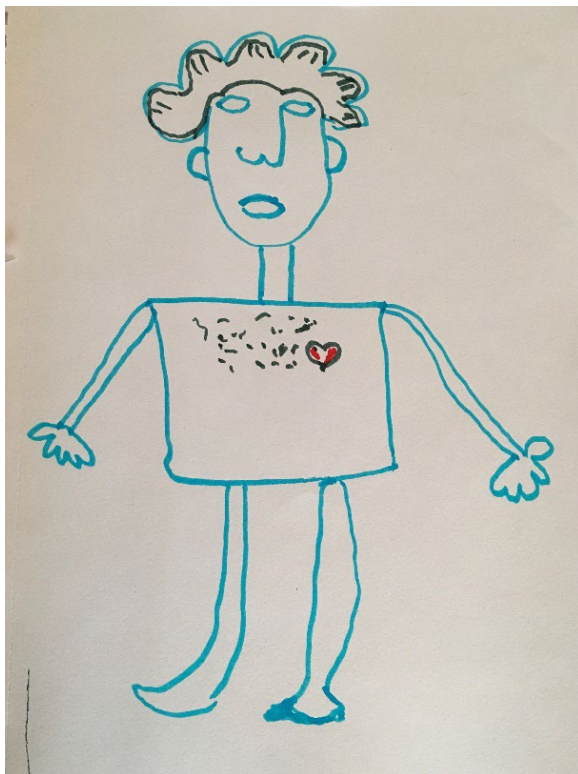


Lucia chose to depict her physical ailments, showing and telling me how central they are to her life and experiences in Wales. The drawing above represents Lucia's severe headaches/migraines and chest and sciatic pain. During our conversation, she explained that her physical symptoms are, at least in part, related

to her emotional and psychological trauma, which continues in some forms. She lives with the stress of not knowing whether she will be allowed to stay in the UK and the risk of a misrecognition of her need for asylum and sanctuary while simultaneously trying to learn English and move past her fears. She explained that the dark grey and black in the drawing represent pain and the impacts of her "*stress in this country*". Therefore, Lucia's picture highlights the increasing understanding of the health impacts of the "slow violence" of the asylum system (Mayblin et al. 2020; Phillimore and Cheung 2021). The system of asking individuals to prove their claims and the prolonged periods in processing them is a misrecognition of asylum seekers' humanity, reflected in the hierarchies I described in Chapter 2.

The impact of uncertainty in the asylum system, stemming from this misrecognition of humanity, has been shown to have long-term and ongoing effects on health, more so on women than men (Phillimore and Cheung 2021). Lucia represents the impacts of her trauma, including a broken heart that still functions in its two pieces due to her children and her love for them. Her children and motherhood motivate her to keep going; that is where she focuses her words on learning, to me. She explained that she did not have goals for herself, but her crucial aim was her children's education:

**Extract 16 - Lucia: Children's Education**

"*Me everything I pray for boys. Oh my god! Inshallah, two children and finish university to see good working and school. God, listen to me and help me.*" And then she told me: "*If me...stop, die - I am very happy just to see finish school, because for my heart is very broken for not finish school.*"

I could hear Lucia's determination for her sons to have the education she was denied. Lucia's trauma and ongoing symptoms meant she had almost lost hope for much of a future for herself. Instead, she was focused on motherhood and ensuring her children had an education and hope for a promising future. For herself, her focus was on learning English for everyday life.

Lucia directly connected the physical impacts of the UK's asylum system and her learning. Lucia explained that her need to learn English is directly linked to her physical health, particularly her chest and breathing issues: "*see if no understand, no writing… chest trouble*". In my interpretation of her words and drawing, Lucia's struggles to communicate with others, both psychologically and linguistically, directly impact her regarding chest pains. Based on the literature on trauma, Lucia seems to describe the physical manifestation of a trauma response (Ford 2008), one compounded by stressors such as issues communicating. Lucia is taking two ESOL classes, totalling four hours a week. Lucia explained to me that this is not sufficient for her to learn and improve her communication quickly, which exacerbates the impact of her trauma and fear of speaking to others. She told me that ESOL teachers did not always have knowledge and understanding of trauma and its effects; for me, this is a form of misrecognition. Lucia's experiences reflect recent research that shows ESOL teachers often have people suffering from trauma in their classrooms but have very little training to support them (Agbaso 2021; Aljumma 2022). Practitioners may be aware of trauma but not the same as the genuine, or complete and enacted, understanding required for recognition, using Fraser's (2007) definition. Therefore, the systemic misrecognition of trauma leads to misinformation within pedagogical approaches. The lack of trauma-informed pedagogy negatively affects

parity of participation both directly in those classrooms and then indirectly in everyday life. My research is not about trauma, nor do I consider myself, as a researcher, properly trauma-informed, so I cannot provide further exploration of the connections between Lucia's physical and mental health and her complex trauma (Lenette 2019). However, this drawing reflects the physical health impact of a lack of trauma-informed support for learning English and adapting to life in Wales (Gordon 2015).

## 6.6  FINANCIAL WELL-BEING

In this section, I will discuss experiences within formal education institutions and systems where I found financial well-being most significant. The barriers to financial well-being for sanctuary seekers in the UK (including Wales) are well-documented, as is the disproportionate economic marginalisation of women over men (Crawley 2013; Reehal et al. 2019). The relationship between financial issues and social, educational, digital and other forms of exclusion is encapsulated in Sanni's photo of her cracked phone.

**Image 28 – Sanni: Cracked Phone**



Sanni took this photograph (image 7) during a pandemic lockdown period. At that time, she was disconnected from critical sources of support. Sanni sent me a

photograph of her phone to show how she maintained contact with others and kept up with her learning during the isolation of lockdowns. Sanni's phone represents digital poverty and the importance of digital inclusion for sanctuary seekers. In Chapter 2, I discussed the isolating impact of the dispersal system, particularly for mothers and the known financial barriers to accessing education. In this chapter's previous sections and Sarah's story in Chapter 5, I have explored intangible forms of educational exclusion, such as eligibility criteria.  For me, Sanni choosing to send me a photo of a cracked phone to represent her learning experiences during lockdown represents all of those forms of marginalisation. Her phone is old and cracked due to her limited funds, yet it is also a lifeline for maintaining personal interactions and social learning. The topic of limited funds was one all my participants raised with me. Participants often raised the issue concerning funding education and the opportunities that it would/could bring.

Paying for formal education was a subject that several of the women raised, showing it remains a crucial barrier. Ira, as discussed in Section 6.3, has a British degree in a healthcare subject and would like to study at the postgraduate level. For her, as an asylum seeker and mother of several young children, paying for a course at that level was her key barrier (not being a parent). She said, "*If I get two hours quiet, that's enough. So, I can still study; it's only the funding. I don't have money to do this.*" Experiences such as Ira's are consistent with the evidence in the literature I have discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Yet, finding a source of funding was not a straightforward solution. The women I talked with described a lack of recognition that sanctuary-seeking mothers may have educational needs and abilities within higher

education. That misrecognition led to a shortage of relevant financial information and advice.

I will now discuss Munira's issues when navigating rules for Student Finance Wales (SFW) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Munira was an undergraduate student when we met.  She explained that her motivation for participating was the opportunity to share experiences that are not recognised and often overlooked. Munira arrived in the UK with her husband and baby. She was granted refugee status within a few months, but her husband's claim was rejected on a legal technicality[54].  He applied for a spousal visa, but in the meantime, he had 'no recourse to public funds.' Munira was advised (by DWP or the local council) that she risked losing any entitlement to state support if they lived together (due to his status). She, therefore, lived as a single mother with her child until her husband's spousal claim was accepted.

Once Munira had sorted out the practicalities of a home, school, and the basics of daily life, she wanted to secure a future for her family. She explained, "*I decided I have to do something. I can't be on benefits*". She, therefore, applied for a course at university and was offered a place. She contacted all the relevant agencies, DWP, SFW, and the local council, to ensure that she only received the

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[54] I discuss in my methods chapter that I will not reveal specific details of legal cases for ethical reasons, as some participants were still fighting their case.

money to which she was entitled. "*I could never decide that if I'm receiving housing benefit or I can't be entitled. I obviously need someone to tell me if I'm entitled.*" She was dependent on the information given to her and had to trust it was correct.

Munira stated, "*The struggles are not only housing and food, and nappies*!". Munira told me that the most significant problems she had faced were a lack of guidance and accurate information – a form of misinformation - on financial support available to her as a refugee, a single mother, and a student. She acknowledged that misinformation was a problem because official agencies did not recognise her needs and abilities as an educated woman seeking a career. She said: "*for women like me* [educated women], *these problems are way more than anything else.*"  In the extracts below, we can see the direct impact of misinformation about financial support on Munira's family when a student, a refugee, and a single mother. In this first extract, we can see Munira's perception that DWP staff did not treat her social categories equally[55]. If she revealed she was a refugee, there was first a risk that would result in different treatment from being seen as a student. Munira's experiences of misrecognition are an essential context for understanding the misinformation she received and the resulting financial impact. Therefore, I will discuss that context first, using the extract below.

---

[55] There is much literature on the stigmatising in the UK of those claiming benefits generally. However, my analysis here centres my participants and their perceptions. I therefore focus on Munira's experiences she presented immigration status. Religion, and single motherhood as the key intersecting factors in her experiences.  The following papers are useful further reading on stigmatising and social security is available (Baumberg 2016; Patrick 2016; Jun 2022)

**Extract 17 – Munira: Presentation Matters**

> *Munira: It's still hard, and every time I went there, I had to be super careful about what I'm wearing about what I'm going to say. There was a lot about presentation at that time/attire. It shouldn't be like that.*
>
> *Laura: No, no, it shouldn't*
>
> *Munira: So, I had to take my university ID with me, and I always introduced myself as a student first and then say that what was my problem instead of starting with refugee.*

Munira's descriptions of her interactions with DWP staff highlight a discriminatory misrecognition. For me, Munira described experiences of intersectional racism as a Muslim woman and mother. To me, these interactions of misrecognition and prejudice - in my interpretation, racism and Islamaphobia - are an essential context for the resulting misinformation and financial impact, which I show through the following extract. She became aware of this and adjusted how she presented herself to minimise it. She described needing to be "*super careful*" about her appearance and what she said. She is a visibly (clothing) Muslim woman, so it seems reasonable to infer that she had experienced intersectional prejudice, specifically gendered racism and Islamophobia. Munira's experiences and perceptions reflect a form of double marginalisation (Alhayek 2014). Munira faced the challenge of being a refugee, a mother, a visibly Muslim, and a student. So, I saw her challenges as multi-layered marginalisation rather than a superficial double layer, reflecting the complexities of Intersectionality discussed by authors such as Erel et al. (2018b) and Yuval-Davis (1999; 2007).

Munira's care with her presentation and speech included a conscious decision to emphasise her student status. She ensured she introduced herself as a student first and had her university identity card with her as proof. Her words suggest it was

necessary to ensure the staff fully understood that she was a student before she discussed being a refugee to ensure her status as the latter did not over-shadow her status as the former. Munira's perceptions reflect the misrecognition of refugee mothers and women. Misinformation through political and media constructions feeds this misrecognition, as discussed by authors such as Seu (2003) and Alhayek (2014).

Furthermore, Munira's experiences reflect the Refugee Council's findings on the lack of awareness and understanding of refugee issues in institutions of learning and financial support in England (Doyle and O'Toole 2013). The existence of such systemic misrecognition in Wales, for Munira at least, had a significant impact on her financial well-being. She described the impact as a mother trying to survive and raise her child on a student loan:

**Extract 18 – Munira: Debts**

*Munira: And, uh, yeah, so, yes... and the consequence was even hard to deliver because I was on income support. So, the lack of information from the council, student finance, on their websites, everything... I kept calling student finance and said I am receiving housing benefit at the moment. I am a refugee. I am a single mother. My child is under 5. So, I am entering full-time university. Do I have to apply for accommodation? Because I saw accommodation on the website, and it was my first time. We don't have student finance in [country]. I did not...I have not...*

*Laura: A completely new system, yeah*

*Munira: And they said, if you live in your own house, everything will continue as normal, and you don't have to find university accommodation. I kept on receiving housing benefit. After a year, I received a letter - overpayment from housing benefit, overpayment from income support. … - I have to pay £500 a month. I also have to pay my rent arrears; they took the benefit back.*

Munira had been proactive about financial support for student mothers, contacting the correct agencies and giving them full details of her circumstances. She had advised the DWP that she was receiving the Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG), yet it seemed she was still given incorrect information and advice about her entitlements. Munira specifically asked about accommodation and was informed that she could continue to live in her home (social housing) and receive housing benefits and income support. She lived this way for a year before the DWP advised that she was not fully entitled to benefits. According to the DWP's calculations, she had received overpayments amounting to several thousand pounds that she needed to repay.

Munira directly connected the experiences she described in Extract 17 – Munira: Presentation and the "*consequence*" of misinformation that she describes in Extract 18.  The ultimate "*consequence*" *of mis*information was severe financial hardship for Munira and her son. The challenge of repaying a large debt had a significant impact on Munira's mental well-being, as she explained:

**Extract 19 – Munira: Well-being**

*I was so depressed by this situation. I was fed up with all of them, and I said I want to withdraw every benefit that I receive. I just want to cancel it right now. So, some of them were online; I could cancel them online. Cancel everything, and I made payment plans for everything that was pending.*

Munira was deeply affected by the impact of trying to do everything correctly but finding herself with debts caused by overpayments. She was "*depressed*" by it all. Her husband had come to live with her again. He had been granted a spousal visa, so he had 'no recourse to public funds' in his own right. He found work, and the

family chose not to claim the social security support they were entitled to. Munira decided that she did not want to risk any further issues and so cancelled *"everything"* that she was claiming in benefits, which would have caused further financial hardship.

Munira had chosen to study to improve her future financially and move away from financial dependence on benefits.  Her desire to work reflected Parker's (2020) findings on sanctuary seekers' connection between work and belonging. I also saw that Munira was striving to be independent and self-sufficient. Her actions and goals were consistent with findings in the existing literature on the racialised, neoliberal constructions of (and pressures to be) a good refugee, immigrant and mother in the British/Welsh social context (Gabriel and Harding 2009a; Lonegran 2015; Kam 2021). Munira wanted an education in the UK to improve her employment prospects and earning potential. She seemingly overcame the financial barriers to formal education at undergraduate level and was on a path to increasing her capital, which could be seen as steps of resilience (Obrist et al. 2010). Yet the move into Higher Education took her into unexpected financial hardship through misrecognition and misinformation. This adverse situation affected more than Munira's financial situation to such an extent that it harmed her mental health and increased her distrust in the systems of support.

## 6.7  SUMMARY DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I have shown the negative impacts of misrecognition and misinformation on the individual well-being of mothers seeking sanctuary with learning and education. My analysis shows that these experiences of misrecognition and misinformation happen with all forms of learning, including higher education, beginner's ESOL classes, voluntary work, interaction in community spaces, or paid employment. I found that misrecognition and misinformation were often related, leading to the latter and vice versa. Moreover, these misrecognition and misinformation experiences have directly impacted mothers' ability to build social networks and develop social capital. In this regard, my analysis supports findings in existing literature (Hynes 2011; Cheung and Phillimore 2017). My analysis also demonstrates the intersectional social reproduction of marginalisation that authors such as Bhattacharyya (2018) discuss in relation to migrant women. My findings show this issue of social reproduction through the misrecognition of all that my participants do and have to offer society and the misinformation that sometimes results in perpetuationof exclusion. However, I provide a more nuanced and feminist perspective for my participants' marginalisation.

The influence of state-led marginalisation of mothers seeking sanctuary has seeped into all aspects of life-related to education and social learning. Experiences such as Ira's (Extract 11 – Ira: Are you going to English class?) and Munira's (Extract 17 – Munira: Presentation) show reductive forms of marginalisation. As I discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, sanctuary-seeking mothers are often reduced to their biological and socially reproductive roles in related perceptions of vulnerability. These reductions help create structural misinformation (disinformation), contributing

to misrecognition and organisational/institutional misinformation. Ira's and Munira's experiences are examples of that cycle of misinformation and misrecognition built into systems that negatively impact sanctuary seekers' well-being.

The connection between misrecognition and misinformation was also visible in some of my participants' stories. For example, official agency staff (DWP) gave Munira different information depending on whether she presented herself as a student or a Muslim refugee first. As another example, Ira was regularly offered basic ESOL classes in a community where she was well-known despite her holding a British degree. These examples indicated that mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales are too often seen as vulnerable and needing support for basic needs to the extent that excludes or neglects their emotional and psychological needs, capabilities, and ambitions. Seu (2003), Reehal et al. (2019), and Bennet (2018) have shown that public perceptions of mothers seeking sanctuary are of vulnerable women who lack capacity.

Institutional misinformation was intertwined with systemic and societal failures to recognise sanctuary-seeking mothers' full range of needs and capabilities. Most women in my research wanted information about formal post-compulsory education options. Even when asking refugee support organisations or visiting educational institutions, they did not get the information they needed or sought. That misinformation was not, institutionally, through attempts to deceive, but rather ,services and systems are not designed to provide relevant and accurate information to sanctuary-seeking mothers. There seems to be a systemic misrecognition that a woman may be a sanctuary seeker, a mother, and someone interested in, capable of, pursuing formal post-compulsory education courses. Sections 6.2, 6.2, and 6.4

show these issues with Ira, Munira and Olena's experiences. Ira's experiences suggest a deliberate strategy to ignore capabilities, as found in London (Mesarič and Vacchelli 2019). Staff in a third-sector refugee support organisation do not show Ira any recognition of the need for services to support her access to Higher Education. If the organisation does not see such needs, it logically follows that they are not seeking resources to support them. Yet, they have secured resources to support learning basic English. The impact of that misrecognition in implementing a strategic service approach harms women like Ira.

My analysis adds new information on the exclusions and marginalisation that mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales experience. There is undoubtedly a narrow and gendered lens through which educational barriers have been viewed in the UK. The impacts of barriers to learning have tended to focus on socio-economics and the subsequent effect on employment (Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). Welsh policy recognises that there needs to be a greater focus on human needs and skills sanctuary seekers have to offer if Wales is to become a 'Nation of Sanctuary' (Welsh Government 2019a). However, there are systemic issues in recognising the skills and experience sanctuary-seeking mothers have to offer and the barriers they face, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3 and Section 3, Section 3.4. Systemic misrecognition and misinformation form a type of education bordering (Oliver and Hughes 2018a). The systems and their services are not designed equitably to ensure parity of participation. Instead, the systems have perpetuated educational exclusion and disadvantages for the women in my research.

What was noticeable in my analysis was that misrecognition and misinformation's impacts happened everywhere and were barely acknowledged

anywhere. Various institutions and organisations offer opportunities, information or help to sanctuary seekers. Some do excellent work in areas I do not have the space to discuss here.  Yet, those services were lacking for every mother included in this chapter. A university offering sanctuary scholarships ejected Olena from a course. ESOL classrooms provided Lucia with language skills but not in a trauma-informed way. Agencies with the specific role of advising students on financial matters and eligibility for financial support created a situation that left Munira with large debts. A charity that provided volunteering opportunities to help Pam 'othered' and excluded her. Organisations run specifically to support asylum seekers and refugees gave erroneous information (about volunteering to Marcia) and irrelevant information (Ira and ESOL classes).  In my participants' experiences, we can see the significance of misrecognition, as Fraser (1998) had already highlighted. For my participants, that significance included misinformation. The combination of misrecognition and misinformation was to perpetuate equity and social injustice with learning. In this chapter, I show that misrecognition and misinformation come together to negatively impact the well-being of sanctuary-seeking mothers.

The impact of misrecognition and misinformation in and around social learning was vast, varied, nuanced and complex.  In this chapter, I have focused on demonstrating that my participants were affected in several key areas of well-being. Learning was essential to every woman I met. Yet every woman has faced educational injustices through experiences I have conceptualised as misrecognition and misinformation. Systemic misrecognition and misinformation form a type of education bordering based on citizenship and immigration hierarchies, as discussed in existing literature (Bassel 2012; Oliver and Hughes 2018a; Yuval-Davis et al.

2018). Structural and organisational systems and services are not designed equitably to bring parity of participation. Instead, the systems have perpetuated educational exclusion and disadvantages for the women in my research. In the following chapter, I will look at the other side of the picture with the benefits that access to social learning can bring.

# 7   LEARNING AS SUPPORT

*"I think when I was leaving the building, I was feeling like a bird. I was thinking I will just open my arms now, and I will fly!" Olena*

## 7.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I seek to answer the research question:

*Does learning play a supportive role for the well-being of mothers seeking a place of sanctuary in Wales?*

In this chapter, I discuss four significant ways social learning has supported mothers to find sanctuary in Wales, which aims to be the world's first Nation of Sanctuary. I use thematic narrative analysis to explore the theme of learning as a source of sanctuary. I specifically explore mothering motivation, mental health, personal identity and community belonging within that theme. As discussed in Chapter 1, my research is with mothers rather than specifically about mothering or motherhood.  In Chapters 5 and 7, the identities and concept of motherhood were more interwoven within the analysis of transitions and barriers of misrecognition. In this chapter, I focus my analysis specifically on identities as mothers and the role of social learning as support for mothering before I then discuss the women's experiences concerning key points they raised in relation to social learning or support or both. In this way, I demonstrate the role social learning plays for personal identities within communities.

This chapter is structured around key areas of life for my participants and fundamental concepts within Wenger's (2018) theory of social learning. Firstly, I explore mothering as a motivation for social learning with Olena's story and then

social learning as a support for mothering for Peng. Secondly, I discuss the role of social learning in mental health, using the terms my participants used to discuss depression and trauma. I discuss the positivity Yvonne has found in keeping busy and then return to Olena to explore how social learning has been a 'medicine' for her. Thirdly, I explore the link between social learning and individual identity. I discuss Aaila's recreation of her personal identity through voluntary work and Marilyn's attempts to restore her professional identity through formal education classes. Finally, I explore belonging through community engagement. I discuss Yadira's participation in a local project alongside her ESOL classes, followed by the concept of home for Aamira. I finish this chapter with a summary discussion of the significance of social learning as both informal learning and formal education for mothers who need sanctuary in Wales.

In the previous two chapters, I explored the individual narratives of four of my participants and then discussed the harms caused by misrecognition and misinformation in social learning spaces. In this chapter, I combine the conceptual framing of social justice and social learning with social and educational theories of human needs. I continue to use Wenger's (2018) social theory of learning, which emphasises meaning, belonging, and identity. I also rely on Wenger-Trayner E. and B.'s (2020) definition of social learning spaces as places where members create value that makes a difference for the community and its members. I frame my analysis using the above sources that show human needs involve more than physical, tangible things such as food and shelter. I explore the role of social learning in supporting less tangible human needs.

Once again, I represent my participants' experiences using the communication mode that each woman emphasised or chose. Therefore, there is greater inclusion of verbal data for some women (for example, Olena) and more use of visual data for others (for example, Aamira). As in Chapter 6, I finish this introduction with an overview, using the visual and digital formats created with input from some of the women.

**Image 29 – Sanctuary Through Learning Digital Overview**

To watch and listen to a digital story combining mothers' images and words as an overview, please click on or scan the QR Code below.

## 7.1.1 VISUAL AND DIGITAL OVERVIEW

**Image 30 – Sanctuary through Social Learning**



| Mothering | ⟷ | Mental Health | ⟷ | Identity | ⟷ | Belonging |
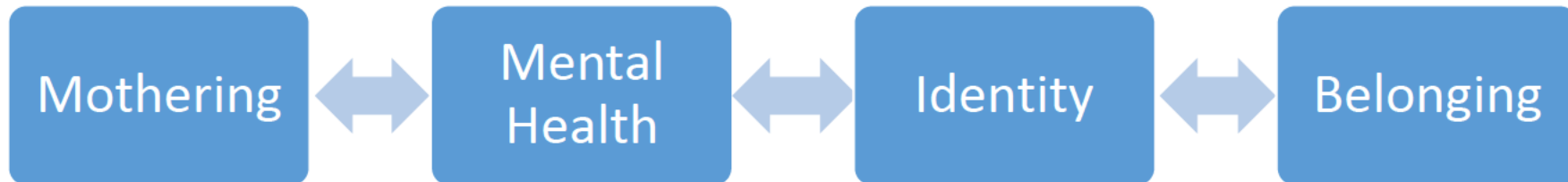
## 7.2  MOTHERING AND SEEKING SANCTUARY

"*I needed to do something just for the sake of my children*." Olena

This section explores two perspectives on the interwoven roles of social learning and mothering. Firstly, I explore my analysis of Olena's motivation to function as a mother. Then, I discuss Peng's experiences as a mother to a disabled child and the intersection of disability with racialisation and motherhood.

### 7.2.1  MOTHERING MOTIVATION

In Chapter 6, I discussed Olena's trauma and the re-traumatisation she experienced due to misrecognition and misinformation in education systems. Yet Olena was not living alone in her trauma and had her life and role as a mother to consider. She described her challenges and her motivation to overcome them:

**Extract 20 – Olena: Who needs my knowledge?**

> *… All of a sudden, I have to queue…and wait for food. And, you know, I taught!… And there I felt proud of my English, and now I came and I, the accent and.... who needs my knowledge?! So, it was a disaster for me, and then I started after a year. I started mental health support. It was not really support for me. I needed to do something just for the sake of my children, and I need to move around. I started volunteering.*

As we can see in her words, Olena had been a woman proud of her skills and accomplishments, plunged into a situation where she felt those same skills were not needed or valued. The impact on Olena was devasting, as discussed in my previous chapter. After a year, she received mental health support, but it was not helpful for her.

However, she was motivated by her motherhood and her children to find a way to function better, so she tried volunteering as a first step towards rebuilding herself and her life. Sarah, in Chapter 5, Section 5.2, and Lucia, in Chapter 6, Section 6.5, expressed similar sentiments about finding a way to pick themselves up for their children. Again, I see the intertwined relationship between learning and mental health needs (Doyal and Gough 1984): undertaking the former is absolutely vital for the latter. As we know from my previous chapter, Olena eventually applied for a postgraduate course that would enable her to continue her professional career in Wales. The process of starting formal education was problematic. However, once she settled into her course, she found studying was the "*medicine*" she needed. I discuss Olena's perspective on the medicinal aspects of formal education in Section 7.3.2

## 7.2.2  MOTHERING SUPPORT

Peng is a single mother of a disabled child. When we met, she had been living in Wales for a few years and had refugee status. Peng explained that she could not undertake a formal course besides ESOL because of her son's (Pierre) specific needs. She has needed to be available for medical appointments and to go to the nursery or school at short notice, should the need arise. When we met, her son was reaching an age where he was old enough and settled enough in school for her to have thought a little more about her future, but she did not yet feel in a position to make an educational commitment. Peng's social circle and support network are tiny. She discussed reasons for her small network, which I interpreted as reflecting the intersectional discrimination

and prejudices she and her son face. In Extract 21, Peng talked about the benefits of social learning for her as a mother of a disabled child.

**Extract 21 – Peng: Disabled Child**

*Sometimes, because of my situation and sometimes because of childcare and like, I might have some friends, but there is the language barrier. But to have friend who is [ethnicity], as I said, some might be scared of my kid. I do join a [ethnicity] group; it's for special... I have two group, one is for my old-time friends, and one is for needs, they come they talk how about education. And I also can talk for help in the case. And I also have the [disability] group and the organising lady, she is very nice, and she have note. When my son have meeting like to do them, I be in support to help me with the profile. And, um, yes, because now when school ask what they can do, I don't know what they can do!* [56]

This extract shows some intersectional challenges Peng and Pierre must navigate as they seek sanctuary. Burns (2017) argues that disability is a human rights issue for migrants (including refugees), and I would agree. Peng is a single mother and did not know anyone else when she arrived in Wales. Peng has faced educational and social exclusion from her own ethnic communities (ableism) and other communities (language barriers). Elsewhere in our conversation, she also discusses her concerns about finding work as a refugee and single parent to a disabled child. Her problems reflect the intersectional challenges she faces, particularly the burden of protecting her child from the reproduction of the social harms of the asylum system (Crenshaw 1989;

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[56] I have redacted words defining ethicnity or nationality and disability as part of my decisions for anonymisation, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Bhattacharyya 2018). As a lone mother, Peng faces challenges as a sanctuary seeker from her diasporic community. She also bears the societal expectations of raising a child who will be a good refugee and future citizen despite any harm inflicted by society and a state policy of hostility (Gabriel and Harding 2009a; Webber 2019; Shobiye and Parker 2022). I discussed those harms and expectations in Chapters 1 (Section 1.5), 2 (Section 2.3), and 3 (Sections 3.2 and 3.3)

Therefore, Peng's social and support network was limited to two critical circles. The first is for refugee women, and the second helps her learn about Pierre's condition to support his needs. Existing literature tells us that refugees' social networks tend to be small, and women's may be smaller than men's (Hynes 2011; Cheung and Phillimore 2017). Peng's social circle as the mother of a disabled child may be smaller again. She cannot fully join her diasporic community as "*some might be scared of my kid*, " but she does not fully belong, as a refugee, in groups for parents of disabled children. However, Peng has found the most support for herself and her son in the group for disabled children. The group has a dual purpose for Peng: learning about the *"education"* school system and practical "*help*" and support. The group's organiser, the mother of a disabled child with the same condition as Pierre, has been teaching Peng about the disability, understanding her son's needs, and advocating with her son's school. This group recognised Peng's need for support and advice. She would not have known how to advise Pierre's school without the group's help. She has been on a steep learning

curve to develop her English skills to communicate and advocate for her son while simultaneously learning about her son's condition.

Peng has had to learn a lot, but most of that learning has been informal and has happened in support or a social group. In Peng's experience, we can again see the benefits of community learning, as discussed in Morrice's work (Morrice 2007) and as a social process defined by Wenger (Wenger 2018). What I can see, additionally, is how significant that is when a mother's learning needs are a necessity for her to support her child's needs. Furthermore, she has been learning about a new cultural context and finding a place in a community for herself and Pierre. The two groups she mentions do not just include Peng and her son; they give support, recognition and a sense of belonging, supporting existing evidence about everyday spaces (Yuval-Davis 2006; Lister 2007). The intersections of motherhood, displacement and a disabled child make the inequalities in accessing formal education even greater. Yet sometimes, there are also benefits to an individual to learn directly from others with lived experience.

## 7.3  MENTAL HEALTH

*"Keeping me busy because if you are doing this, you can't depressed."* Yvonne

My research is not specifically about mental health, nor is it entirely trauma-informed, although I considered trauma and the emotional labour of my participants (and myself) when choosing my methodological approaches (Whitt-Woosley and Sprang 2018; Lenette 2019).  However, all the women talked to me about their mental health and their general observations of the mental health of other women seeking sanctuary. Mental

health was a significant area for my participants, as shown by how many raised the topic. I have included some key points from my analysis of Yvonne and Olena's stories.

Existing literature tells us that sanctuary seekers globally are at greater risk than general populations of developing depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychotic disorders, and disabling symptoms of psychosocial stress (Bäärnhielm et al. 2017). The terms my participants used were depression and trauma. My participants described learning as vital for improving their mental health.

## 7.3.1  KEEPING BUSY

Yvonne was living as a single mother when I met her. She had arrived in Wales to be with her husband, and they had started a family together. Unfortunately, he turned violent, and staff in a local third-sector organisation helped her to leave him. Her flight from her marriage also forced her to move to a new location in Wales. When we talked, she described her experiences during and after her marriage. In the extract below, we discussed some of the work experience she had gained through voluntary work (while unable to do paid work). She talked to me about her reasons for doing that work.

**Extract 22 - Yvonne: Keeping Busy**

> Yvonne:…It was nice to go just to spend time there, for myself as well, just not to get bored. Because I was pregnant at that time. So, I was quite nice for me than stay in the house. You stay in the house you get bad. You don't have any to talk to, only your husband and sometimes your husband goes. So just meet with other people there and talk. Then you go home.
>
> Laura: So at least it gave you other people to talk to, a place to go.
>
> Yvonne: A place to go, yeah, that's good.

*Laura: And did you make friends in [Welsh place] before you had to leave?*

*Yvonne: Yeah, I have some friends there. We talk together now. For me it's having the chance having somewhere to volunteer. Sometime I went back for job. That was in [work area], just Saturday and Sunday. That was good as well. Keeping me busy.*

*Laura: Yeah, absolutely!*

*Yvonne: Keeping me busy because if you are doing this, you can't depressed … You can be [long pause] because when you are busy, you can't think what has happened. Like now, if I'm not busy, I think I would think too much.*

*Laura: Yes. So, for you, you feel it's quite important to keep busy*

*Yvonne: Yeah. It's better to keep your mind on something.*

Yvonne's experiences reflect Pam's and Dansitu's, which I discussed in Chapter 5 and the sentiments expressed by Gabina in Chapter 6. I have included Yvonne's words because the point about keeping the mind busy was repeated so often, in different ways, by my participants. Yvonne found voluntary care or housekeeping work was a way for her to do that. She had a reason to leave the house, to interact with other people, and to keep her mind busy so that she would not "*think too much*". Unlike Pam (Chapter 5, Section 5.4), Yvonne did not discuss increasing her employability during this part of our dialogue. Her priorities were clear: "*just not to get bored*" and "*not get bad*". Her work provided her with a place to meet people and converse, which she says helped ensure she did not get depressed. For me, therefore, Yvonne's care and domiciliary work was a social process and a form of social learning where there was a mutual benefit for her, her clients, and the organisation (Wenger 2018). She had a place where she had a clear role, engaging with others and doing something for her community. A benefit of that process was keeping her mental health sound, confirming

further the findings of Bäärnheilm et al. (2017).  on the value of community engagement for the mental health of sanctuary seekers.

## 7.3.2  FORMAL EDUCATION AS MEDICINE

In my previous chapter, in Section 6.4, I discussed when Olena's experiences with higher education systems had been re-traumatising for her. Here, I provide her contrasting experiences, where postgraduate education revived her life. Some of these events happened after those I discussed in Chapter 6, but there was an overlap. Education was the aid Olena needed - she told me, "*I just used this studies like this is like a medicine."*. She was clear that formal education, postgraduate courses at two different universities, has had a restorative effect on her mental health and her life, as shown in the extract below.

**Extract 23 – Olena: Improving Mental Health**

*First of all, I see the improvement - the difference between my life before any of these courses. I realise it when I started doing the courses. Before that, I couldn't dream. I couldn't, like, I couldn't see my future. I was just staying and okay, now, fine, five years, and I didn't get my right to stay. If I get it now, what I'm going to do? I'm not a young girl. I can't start afresh. I can but, but what are my choices? Then, when I started doing the course, I know that I can still have problems with getting a job. I know it will be difficult, but at least I have a hope now. I have local degree. I don't have to start proving what I had before. And I hope I will get something to do. So, you know, when you study, for me, this is like a contribution to my future. Finally, I am doing something for myself. I couldn't be with myself for five years before the university, so I don't know how I survived.*

Olena separated her life as an asylum seeker into the 'before' and 'after' *"any of these courses"*. In the 'before', she was not living; she struggled with trauma and her losses – home, family, identity, security, and more.  She said: *"I couldn't be with myself for five years before the university, so I don't know how I survived."* Olena's life before entering formal education was not a life for her. Section 6.4 of Chapter 6 also shows how she was harmed and traumatised, experiencing feelings of pointlessness, hopelessness, and anger.

In contrast, Olena's descriptions of her 'after' in Extract 23 above show that her 'after' of starting a university course gave her a sense of purpose. Education gave her a "*contribution to my future*". It gave her life value and a sense of purpose and belonging in her local and professional community, aligning with Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's(2020) concept of value creation. I see Olena's postgraduate studies as more than education for qualification and employment. The section of the interview, from which Extract 23 is taken, finished with Olena saying: "*When people pay attention at your story, and then I have a lot of experience to share.*" Olena's course and related activities can be seen as social learning, as her participation and engagement with others through education provided the interactions that developed her sense of belonging in a community, a professional one in which her knowledge and experience matters. The community experience, not just the qualification, has helped her rebuild her identity in which being an asylum seeker was accepted. Through the social learning process, Olena has also found a form of healing. Her trauma is not erased or forgotten but no longer consumes her.

Here, we can see that the needs of learning, belonging, hope, and identity - professional and personal (motherhood), are all interwoven for Olena. She had needed to find something as a mother "for the sake of her children". Yet she also needed to do something for herself as "*she couldn't be with myself for five years before the university*". Olena knew the path ahead would not be unproblematic but explained, "*at least I have a hope now*". Her words highlight the importance of education and hope for asylum seekers' mental health, which Crawley et al. (2011) had written about a decade earlier. Olena's experiences slowly ceased to be solely a source of trauma and exclusion (Bäärnhielm et al. 2017), and instead, through education, she was finding a way to rebuild herself. She had found a way to feel she had a place to belong, where she was recognised once more in a community (Fraser 1998; Lister 2007). Through her studies and professional events, she realised that she had something to contribute to her new society and that her knowledge has value and worth, not just monetary. Formal education, as a social learning experience, has been Olena's "*medicine*".

## 7.4  PERSONAL IDENTITY

"*I'm building my new ID*." Aaila

My analysis found clear connections between social learning and a sense of personal identity that align with Wenger's social theory of learning (Wenger 2018). I could interpret my participants' experiences as identity constructions through participation and community engagement (Wenger 2018). For example, some identity building is evident in Olena's words in Section 7.3.2. Additionally, all four narratives in Chapter 5 are

stories of the rebuilding of self, including identity. In this section, I will focus on Aaila and Marilyn to illustrate two sides of social learning and identity building for sanctuary-seeking mothers: recreation and restoration.

## 7.4.1 RECREATION

Aaila is a single mother with three young children and was an asylum seeker when we spoke. She arrived in Wales with her husband, but they subsequently divorced. Her ex-husband provided minimal parenting partly as she and the children were then dispersed to a different location in Wales from him. Aaila had previously worked internationally in a professional role that requires postgraduate qualifications. However, as I said above, she would need to retrain to do the same role in the UK. When we spoke, she told me she had been offered places at two universities. She had applied for courses that she hoped would enable her to use but also redirect her existing skills and experience. She was waiting to hear about the funding that would allow her to take up one of the places. In the meantime, she was busy in a full-time voluntary position. Aaila strongly linked education as a route into paid employment, highlighting the neoliberal emphasis on that link in existing policy and literature (Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019; Parker 2020; Welsh Government 2021a). Aaila talked to me about her current volunteering, making a direct connection to identity, as shown in Extract 24 below.

**Extract 24 – Aaila:  Building new ID**

*I feel like I'm get more benefit from you, and I'm doing full-time unpaid job, which is volunteer. But I feel like you give me more than money, okay, because I'm*

*building my CV. I'm building my confidence. I'm building my personality. I'm building my new ID*

In the above extract, Aaila talked about the benefits she gained from her voluntary role. She mentioned the connection with employment when she said, "*I'm building my CV*", but that is just one benefit. Aaila was excluded from the paid labour market by the legal system, but her labour is not just about the monetary value associated with it. She was explicit that her learning and developing skills through volunteering is about "*more than money*" for her. Aaila knew she was doing a full-time job for no pay but felt she gained more benefits from her labour than the organisation. Through voluntary work, Aaila met vital human needs of learning, survival, and communication (Doyal and Gough 1984). She was developing some social and cultural capital that could be useful in the labour market, transferring it into (potential) economic capital. She created forms of capital and met human needs considered vital for integration by researchers and policymakers alike (Cheung and Phillimore 2014; Cheung and Phillimore 2017; Welsh Government 2021a).

Yet more than that, Aaila was re-building her self-confidence and self-esteem. Aaila was conscious that she was creating a CV with British/Welsh work experience and new skills. She is building her new self, as she explicitly says her "*personality"* and "*ID".* Voluntary work is considered a vital community activity in Welsh and British society. By volunteering, Aaila fully participates in the community by contributing her skills while learning new skills and understanding the local employment systems. She is also in a space where she can develop and discover herself in the new context of seeking

asylum and becoming a single mother in a new cultural, social and linguistic
environment.

To me, volunteering is social learning for Aaila in a community of practice created
through sanctuary development and support. For Aaila, a vital part of the social learning
process involved in that space is the recreation of her identity (Wenger 1998). However,
she does not wish to be unpaid forever and sees formal education as the key to
ensuring a secure financial future.

**Extract 25 – Aaila: You can build your future**

*I'm someone who who think... who thinks that the education in any aspects in any*
*thought it's the most important thing in this world. Because if you have this*
*education, you will not go in the poverty, you will not go in need. You will not go*
*in a lack of acknowledgement and the lack of luck as well. Because you can build*
*your luck, you can build your, your, future, if you gain the education…*
*…it's important for me because it's it will give me a feeling that I have all the rights as*
*a human, you know, one of these rights is education and to be employed, so. I*
*need, I need, I need to feel like I can. If I want to travel, I can travel if I want to*
*buy this, I can do that. I don't want to think about the money, and I'm not in debt.*

In Aaila's words, she considered education a way to build "your future". During
other parts of our interviews, Aaila talked about the weight of carrying sole responsibility
and accountability for her family's future. In the extract above, she was referring to her
future as a mother when she says, "*your future*". She sees education as the key to her
success in fulfilling those responsibilities. Education is the means to avoiding destitution
and "*poverty*". Significantly, Aaila continued to say that education is a means to prevent
being "*in need*", which I interpret as the vital component in meeting core human needs

for Aaila, from food and shelter to valued identity and autonomy with her community (Wenger 2018; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). She immediately follows her words about poverty and need with ones about not experiencing  "*a lack of acknowledgement and the lack of luck*". The proximity of these words suggests that Aaila does not just see the worth of education in economic terms. I see Aaila's idea of *"acknowledgement"* as aligned with the idea of status and prestige contained in the concept of symbolic capital.

Furthermore, Aaila added: "*I have all the rights as a human",* reminding us that "*one of those rights is education".* In my interpretation, applying theories of social learning and recognition (Fraser 2007; Wenger 2018), Aaila's participation in the community through education is a way towards parity with other British residents and recognition of her humanity and capabilities. For these reasons, Aaila described education as "*the most important thing in this world*". Education gives her hope of a future in Wales with recognised humanity and autonomy as an individual and mother, not just identified as a sanctuary seeker.

## 7.4.2  RESTORATION

So many women I met (either as participants in my research or just during my fieldwork) were skilled with professional or specialist experience. Yet, they found themselves languishing, unable to use those abilities and capabilities, as discussed in the previous chapter and Sarah's story in Chapter 5, Section 5.2**.** Education, particularly formal education, was often crucial to allowing my mothers to transfer or use their existing

skills and experience. When we first met, Marilyn was a healthcare professional

converting her qualifications by studying for UK equivalents. Just before our second

interview, Marilyn obtained refugee status. As we talked, she described what getting

that status meant for her and her family's futures, using education to build a new life and

contribute to her new community. The drawing she did for me during that second

interview represented the positive difference refugee status would mean for Marilyn in

terms of learning and her identity.

**Image 31 – Marilyn: Activities**
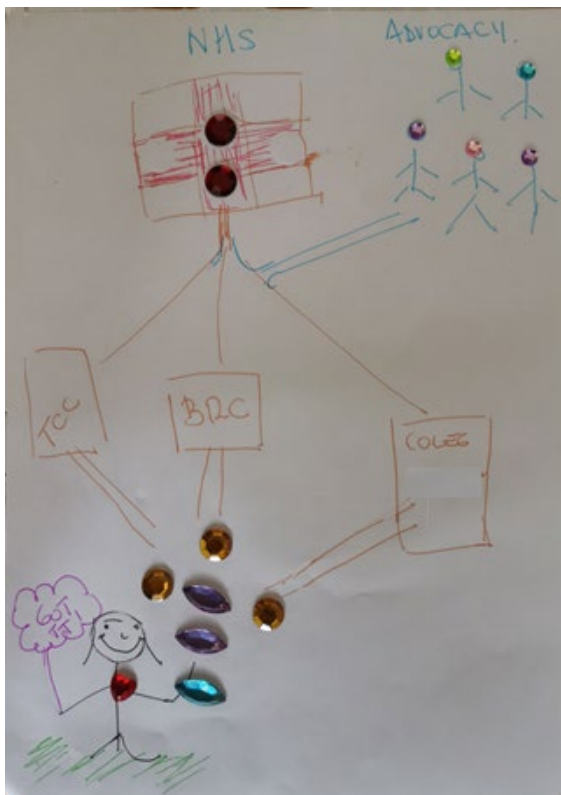


      Marilyn's image reflects how essential her community engagement and

participation are for her life and rebuilding her identity in Wales. She has depicted her

social learning spaces, where she builds meaning for her identity and a sense of

belonging in her local community[57] (Wenger 2018; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). These spaces are literally and figuratively central on the page. She is standing on grass, which she explained further illustrates the sense of fertility for her future. In the bottom left-hand corner of the image, Marilyn is holding a celebratory balloon with the words "*Got It*!". She told me it represents her refugee status and Leave to Remain. In her other hand, she is holding her future with bright gems to reflect her happiness and joy. There are branches to representations of community organisations that have, and continue to play, a key role in her life. These organisations have supported her in finding and studying for qualifications and developing teaching and advocacy skills. They are also organisations for whom Marilyn has made significant contributions through advocacy and knowledge sharing. The organisations are, for Marilyn, a gateway to her future, for which she has a clear vision.

These organisations represent social learning spaces where Marilyn builds a new life and community-based identity while regaining her professional identity (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). Marilyn is determined to work for the NHS, using her skills and years of experience in her specialism. She also wants to continue with the advocacy and community work that she has started. Marilyn represented these goals at the top of the picture. She explained that reaching paid work in those top spaces would

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[57] I have not provided more detail about these spaces as it would definitely be very identifying.

be the achievement of goals that would help her feel personally fulfilled and contribute

her knowledge to her new home country.

## 7.5 COMMUNITY BELONGING

**Image 32 – Aamira: Thanks and Belonging**
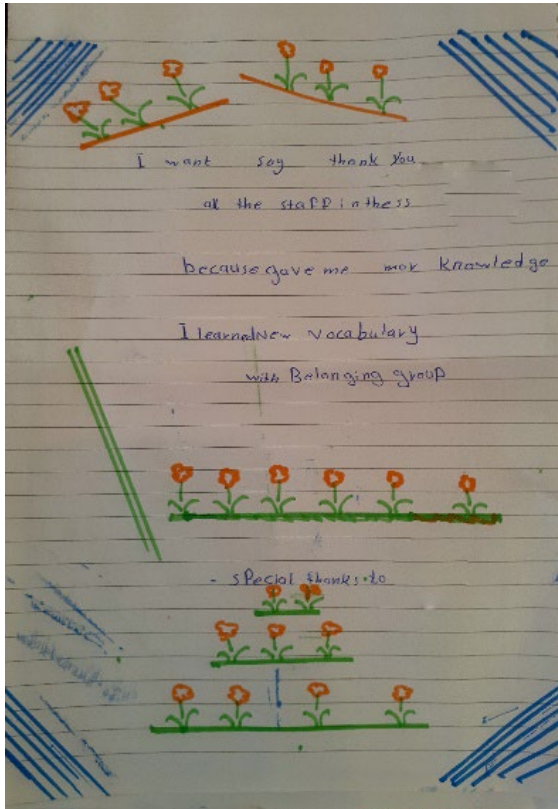


All the women in my research talked about contributing to their new community and

country. The letter from Aamira above is just one of three letters of thanks she wrote for

me and sent to me as her visual data during the first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. The

letters all thanked people or groups in the community who supported her (including me).

In this section, I explore two critical concepts for community belonging as part of

social learning processes: participation and home. Firstly, I discuss Yadira's story of

transforming herself from a 'stay-at-home' mother to someone dreaming of being a businesswoman and mother. Secondly, I discuss Aamira's second interview drawing, where she depicts her settlement and sense of finding a home in Wales.

## 7.5.1  PARTICIPATION

Yadira arrived in Wales as part of a resettlement programme. She came to Wales with her husband, children, and extended family. Yadira had studied at a post-compulsory level in her home country. When she completed her course, she got married and started a family. Yadira followed a path for motherhood that is very typical in her home country and was a 'stay-at-home' mother (SAHM), to use a very British term). When we met, she was living as a SAHM in Wales with young children (at least one was still under compulsory school age when we met). Yadira had also become active in the local community based around her ESOL classes, a charity, and with more established diasporic families. She has become part of a community of practice as a social learning space (Wenger 1998; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020) focused on a new catering business and service. In the extract below, she talked to me about the space's positive impact on her.

**Extract 26 – Yadira: Transitions**

> *Yadira: Now, because when you here coming and start work for cook and see the people happy and this. And see people for something for ideas for... I don't know why change, but very good here.*
> *Laura: It seems that you've seen other people doing this here and you've seen they're happy so.*
> *Yadira: Exactly!*

*Laura:... it - the word inspiring? Maybe you can see other people doing something,*
*and it makes you think I can do that?*

*Yadira: Yeah, yeah, exactly this.*

*Laura: And maybe you want to work with that, or would that be for cooking at home*
*or...? What would you want to do afterwards?*

*Yadira: I think maybe in future, open a restaurant and move something. Yeah, I have*
*ideas.*

Yadira described social learning as key to her future in Wales. Her informal

voluntary work had given her insight and inspiration into opportunities. Through her

catering work, she could see how others had adapted to life in Wales and that they were

"*happy*". The visibility of and participation in activities with other refugees and the wider

local community on a joint venture has been a positive experience for Yadira. Not only

is she learning new skills, but she is learning them in a way that can help her see Wales

as a home, a place with a future for her and her family. Therefore, Yadira's informal

voluntary work is a form of social learning in a community of practice, building her sense

of belonging (Wenger 1998; 2018). She is part of a community project that is helping to

change and shape the community, as it accepts refugees and shapes Yadira's family

life and future. That mutual benefit is a form of value creation through social learning

(Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020).

Yadira's life in Wales is not just different due to a forced change in geographical

location. If she had not been forced to flee her home country, Yadira would have been a

SAHM indefinitely in her home country. In Wales, she has plans to "*maybe in future*

*open a restaurant*"; she has "ideas". Her words show she is not holding onto the social

and gendered norms she was forced to leave behind. Her willingness to change in her

societal and familial role contrasts public perceptions of refugee women as culturally too

'other' and unable to integrate (Anderson 2013). My analysis showed that through

interwoven social and learning support, Yadria is transitioning into life as a woman and

a mother in Wales, taking in Welsh social and gendered expectations of women as

'independent' and 'social contributors' (Anderson 2013). She is becoming a 'good

refugee' (Gabriel and Harding 2009b). She also continues to meet Welsh societal

expectations of a 'good mother' (Maher et al. 2021). Yadira is still the primary carer for

her children. She still plays a crucial role in supporting other relatives in the family.

Yadira's communication with me suggested a sense of pride in the new life she was

building for herself and her family as an active member of their new community. The

photograph, Image 33, below shows that pride.

**Image 33 - Yadira: New Woman**



In the unedited version of this photograph, Yadira is smiling broadly. Her

accompanying words described helping her community during a lockdown. She

volunteered to help distribute food and other needed items to other community

members. I could only interpret this photograph as one showing immense pride and

happiness in her community role in her new life.  Whether the changes to Yadira's life

are a form of integration or assimilation could be subject to debate and differing

interpretations. Perhaps she feels obliged to perform British citizenship and motherhood

due to British society's racialised and gendered hierarchies (Erel et al. 2016). However,

that is not a sentiment that Yadira expressed directly or indirectly. Therefore, I focused

on her developing a sense of belonging through the social learning space of catering activities.

## 7.5.2 HOME

Aamira is a married mother who arrived in the UK on a spousal visa to be with her refugee husband. She had a degree from her home country. She could not use her qualifications in the UK and primarily cared for her very young child and learning English when we met. Aamira studies English formally. Her husband looks after the baby while she attends the classes, in contrast to Webet's experiences that I described in Chapter 6 Section 6.4. She also tries to teach herself by watching TV, listening to music and talking to other people in groups and public places like shopping centres. Aamira had clear ideas for further study. When we met the second time, those ideas had become a clear plan to study for a business degree, starting as soon as her English proficiency reached the required level. Overall, Aamira had a positive perspective on her experiences and the support she received to learn English from community organisations. That positivity was reflected and represented in the images she created for me.

**Image 34 – Aamira: Independence and Belonging**
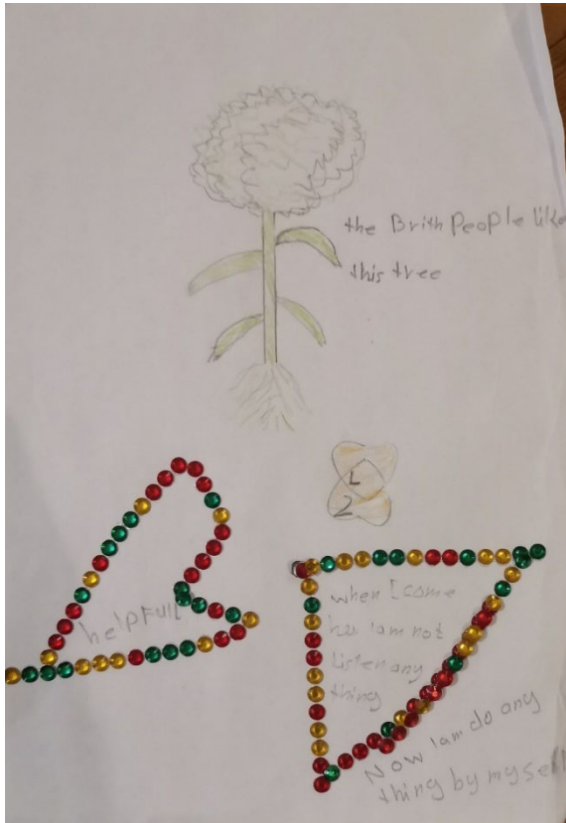


The image above is the picture Aamira created for me the second time we met to

talk. She has represented the changes she experienced as she settled into life in

Wales. Her representations include details of spaces and activities that reflect, for me,

the interwoven processes and concepts of belonging and social learning (Wenger

2018). When Aamira arrived in Wales, she could not understand anyone or

communicate much with others. She experienced what Nawyn et al. (2012) described

as linguistic and social isolation. Aamira represented her period of isolation with the

closed triangle. The jewelled heart next to the triangle reflects her sense of freedom

from the trap of isolation that came through community help and support. She has

developed a sense of independence through support, particularly with her English skills, reflected by the words "*doing thing by myself*" just outside the triangle.

Aamira's representation supports Philimore et al.'s (2007) findings on the importance of linguistic capital for a sense of independence, confidence, and belonging for refugees. During both interviews, Aamira told me how important it was for her to have the autonomy to go to the shops, the doctor, et cetera, by herself and for herself and her child. She worked extremely hard on her English skills to achieve that independence and to cease being a dependent outsider, highlighting that English is an 'essential skill' as defined by the (Welsh Government 2018). The tree she drew reflects the connection between Aamira's linguistic capital, social learning and belonging. Aamira told me that the tree represents Wales and the British people as a tree that can be home to birds from anywhere. This representation of Wales suggests that Aamira feels welcomed in Wales and has found a 'tree' that she can call home, where she feels she can belong (Yuval-Davis 2006). Learning English is not something Aamira did alone, although she has taught herself a lot through television, radio, music and talking to people. The support she has found through and in learning spaces has been a process of interaction and mutual engagement, creating a sense of belonging and home.

## 7.6  SUMMARY DISCUSSION

This chapter explored the positive role that learning plays for mothers seeking sanctuary while living in the UK's increasingly racist 'hostile environment'. Through my analysis, I have shown that social learning spaces can be a vital source of sanctuary for mothers in Wales. That sense of sanctuary has come through receiving sufficient recognition (Fraser 2007) to enable social learning processes to take place (Wenger 2018). Throughout this chapter, I have shown how mutual (not necessarily equitable) engagement and participation processes supported mothers in developing knowledge and understanding. Through social learning, mothers gained new skills and experiences that built their social and cultural capital, but that was not all they achieved. The women who spoke to me talked of the benefits for themselves as mothers, their mental health, their self-esteem and identity, and a sense of belonging.

Yvonne and Olena's stories show how important learning has been in helping them rebuild their mental health and stay healthy. Olena also talked about being a mother who needed to fulfil her role of being mentally and emotionally present for her children. She explained that her children motivated her to do something, and she found herself for them and herself again through social learning spaces. Peng found the knowledge and support for the intersectional barriers she faced as a mother to a disabled child. Aaila was explicit that volunteering in a workplace had provided her with the tools to build her identity in Wales. Marilyn depicted her route to restoring her professional identity (and building a new one) through distinct social learning spaces. By their very nature, social learning spaces allow individuals to participate, engage with the

community, and find belonging. Yadira's experiences show how she contributed to and shaped her community's future and life through a local catering project. Aamira represented how Wales has become home to her through support from and engagement with local community groups and classes.

My analysis showed that my participants placed much more value on education than its potential monetary worth alone. Aamira's drawing, Image 34 in Section 7.5.2, reflects her increased sense of autonomy and belonging. In Section 7.4, Aaila's words in Extract 25 and Marilyn's drawing in Image 31 emphasise the importance of learning for employability. That importance of employability is about earning money, of course, but it is also a sense of belonging and contribution. Existing literature explores such benefits of learning for people sanctuary-seeking, which I have discussed in more depth in Chapters 2 and 3. For example, Phillimore et al. (2007) briefly discuss the increased sense of autonomy and independence that refugees, men and women, gain from ESOL classes. In Wales, Chick and Hannan-Lewis (2019) explored ESOL education and pathways to employment in Wales, arguing for greater flexibility in English language requirements for employers. My findings, therefore, add further depth to the existing literature.

This chapter helps to build on that literature base and provides insight into the benefits of social learning for women seeking sanctuary in Wales. My findings demonstrate that Wales has scope to move towards becoming a Nation of Sanctuary despite the UK's hostile environment. Social learning and the spaces in which those processes happen cannot counter all the trauma and hostility sanctuary seekers face.

However, I have shown that it can provide a vital role for women to find sanctuary in Wales as mothers, humans, and new members of Welsh communities. Universities can indeed be institutions of sanctuary, as shown in Section 7.3.2 with Olena's experiences. Civil Society organisations can help women like Aamira (see Section 7.5.2) feel that Wales is their home. Morrice (2007) has evidenced the particular significance of informal learning for sanctuary-seeking women. She highlighted the importance of social networks and integration. Klenk's (2017) work, referencing Morrice's, highlighted that informal social learning is still undervalued, negatively impacting refugee women. In this chapter, I have shown that social learning happens in both informal and formal settings, demonstrating the undervaluing of the processes for sanctuary seekers.

I have discussed the social learning played for my participants in meeting some core human needs. Sanctuary seekers in the UK are increasingly dehumanised and demonised, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4. Yet, as Aaila said (Section 7.4.1), they are human beings who should be accorded human rights. Social learning provides a means to meet core human needs and a route to regaining some rights in a hostile system that legally denies asylum seekers fundamental rights. I used elements of Wenger's (2018) definition of social learning to understand the meeting of individual and societal needs. From there, I showed the positive impacts of social learning processes of interaction, engagement and participation on four areas of my participants' experiences: mothering, mental health, identity, and belonging.

This chapter shows the range of places in which the phenomenon of social learning occurs. My analysis illustrates how educational institutions, community groups,

and potential employers can all create a social learning space or a community of practice, as defined by Wenger (1998) and Wenger-Trayner B. and E (2020). I demonstrate that recognition in learning spaces is not a neutral phenomenon but directly benefits the mother seeking sanctuary and her new community. Social learning is a social phenomenon that can provide some sanctuary for asylum-seeking and refugee mothers in Wales. The role of social learning is significant in the UK context of a corrosive and hostile environment that particularly harms women and mothers (Webber 2019; Canning 2020). Formal education, informal social learning, and workplace training (formal or informal) can all involve social learning processes that can play an essential role in the face of the UK's 'hostile environment'. Through social learning spaces, mothers can find sanctuary for themselves as mothers, women, and people, for their mental health and identity as individuals and members of a new community.

# 8   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

## 8.1   THESIS SUMMARY

Before I discuss my thesis and draw some conclusions from my research, I would like to provide the option of a visual reminder of my participants and the work we did together.

The QR Code below provides an opportunity to revisit the experiences I have sought to represent in this thesis and why I sought to pursue research for change. Please click on or scan the code to view the web page of participants' images:

**Image 35 - Web Page of Visual Data**



### 8.1.1   INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the experiences of an under-researched social group in an area that has received insufficient focus in policy and research in the UK and Wales. I have shown that existing policy and research address women seeking sanctuary, but both do so in reductive ways that lack depth. Policy perpetuates the two-dimensional and reductive discourse, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, where sanctuary-seeking

women are often reduced to their reproductive roles.   Both policy and research in the UK have paid attention to women seeking asylum and living as refugees. The role of education for them, but literature focusing specifically on refugee education and women in the UK is sparse, and there is none for Wales. In Chapter 2, Sections 2.4 and 2.5, I discussed policies referring to refugee education in Wales, such as the Nation of Sanctuary Plan(Welsh Government 2019a). In Chapter 3, I discussed work on refugee education and women in the UK, such as Klenk's (2017) research with women learning ESOL in London. My thesis adds to this limited existing body of knowledge by providing a depth of experiential evidence on sanctuary-seeking mothers and learning. My research also sits within a broader body of literature on the subjective realities of marginalised and oppressed groups of racialised women.

In this final chapter, I reflect on my research and the contents of the whole thesis. In Section 8.1.2, I reflexively summarise each of the preceding seven chapters in this thesis. I then move into Section 8.2, outlining and discussing my key findings. Section 8.3 discusses my work's research and policy implications and recommendations I would make from it.  In Section 8.4, I explore my work's current and potential impact through engagement and dissemination with civil society and educational organisations who have (or might) shown interest in my research. I finish this chapter and this thesis with my final reflections on my time as a doctoral researcher and my PhD project.

## 8.1.2  OVERVIEW

I explained in Chapter 1 that my personal experiences helped bring me to Intersectional Feminism as my overarching theoretical and epistemological framework. I provided brief definitions and explanations of theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in race and migration scholarship, namely Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Racial Capitalism. I discussed the Feminist developments within and relating to those frameworks, particularly the concept of Intersectionality (Mügge et al. 2018; Carbado et al. 2020; Cisneros 2021). I explained that I take an Intersectional Feminist perspective in my research.

In Chapter 2, I used those theories to frame my contextual discussion on immigration policy and policy debates. I demonstrated the UK's history of racialised immigration policy since the Second World War. I highlighted the divergence between the Home Office policies and the Welsh Government's strategic plans. The UK Home Office has become increasingly focused on systems of hostility criminalisation. I agree with those commentators who see that focus steeped in racism and racialisation (Webber 2019; Amnesty International UK 2022; Gower and Butchard 2022). In contrast, the Welsh Government (2019b; 2022c) has developed strategic plans to become a Nation of Sanctuary and Anti-Racism. I briefly discussed the implications of that divergence when immigration is reserved to the UK Government, but border control is now systematised across areas of everyday and devolved policy such as education.

In Chapter 3, I referred to these policy contexts in exploring the application of fundamental social theories in UK and Welsh refugee education literature. I related my overarching Critical and Intersectional Race and Feminist perspectives to broader social theories of education and learning. I focused on the academic debates on education and inequality, discussing the relationship between my area of research and theories and concepts such as forms of capital, social reproduction, social change and justice, and social learning (Fraser 1995b; Bhattacharyya 2018; Bourdieu 2018a). I showed how researchers had applied these theories and concepts in literature on race, migration, gender and education. I explored the literature on refugee education from a perspective of social justice or reproduction in a society built on systems of multiple layers of oppression and marginalisation. Through the first three chapters of this thesis, I outlined where my research sits within substantive and theoretical literature. In doing so, I have highlighted the research gap which my thesis fills.

In Chapter 4, I discussed and explained my methodological decisions and research design, including research ethics, representation, and presentation. I centred myself as the researcher to show why it was important to me to conduct situated, ethnographic, qualitative research using the tools of interviews and drawing, then photo elicitation and visual and digital story creation. Ultimately, I wanted to generate data with my participants, not collect it from them, and do so as ethically as possible (Mannay 2016a; Pickering and Kara 2017; Ellingson and Sotirin 2020). Creative methods lend themselves well to my desire to approach data generation as collaboratively as possible. I felt collaborative methods were significant for two key

reasons. One reason was conceptual consistency within my Intersectional Feminist approach, working specifically with sanctuary-seeking mothers. The other reason was ethical consideration when working with women who may have experienced trauma, part of which may have interrogative and extractive information-gathering processes of the UK's asylum system (for example, Home Office interviews). My key constraints were limited research experience, confidence, skills, and a global pandemic. Yet some of my essential skills were my personal life experiences, non-research professional skills, and the relationships I built through those attributes. My personal social characteristics also played a crucial role in how I approached my research and how both gatekeepers and participants received me.

My voice and interpretations are evident in my Chapters 5, 6, and 7 analysis. I used the theories, frameworks, and literature discussed in Chapters 1-3 to interpret, analyse and discuss my findings following standards for academic research. However, I have chosen to present my analysis in ways that I hope put the mothers' representations, either linguistically or visually, at the forefront of my interpretations. I tried to ensure that my understanding and need for academic presentation in a doctoral thesis did not overshadow my participants' communication (through words or images) but amplified them and provided contextual focus.

While the thesis itself has not been read in full by any sanctuary seekers, they have read a journal article and a briefing report for which I took similar approaches. Using the visual and digital story formats presented here, I have also started disseminating findings and sharing knowledge and understanding in refugee community

spaces. These dissemination processes have also formed part of my collaborative approach, providing a means for ethical engagement and confirming ethical representation and presentation. The feedback from sanctuary seekers, participants and more was that I have represented and amplified their experiences in the outputs they have seen. Through my ongoing engagement with the relationships I have built in refugee communities, I have already started seeing the influence and impact of my work in practice, policy, and research (see Sections 8.3 and 8.4).

## 8.2 KEY FINDINGS

In this section, I combine the key points from my empirical findings chapters and show how I have addressed each research question on learning and transitions, barriers, and support. I structured my empirical Chapters 5, 6, and 7 to address one question directly in each chapter. I also structured this section to reflect the three research questions on transitions (Chapter 5), barriers (Chapter 6), and support (Chapter 7). I draw out and discuss the key themes. I highlight the main findings and relate them to the other parts of this thesis.

## 8.2.1 TRANSITIONS OF RESILIENCE

In Chapter 5, I sought to understand the role that learning plays in the transitions of mothers seeking sanctuary experience and their development of social resilience during those transitions. In this chapter, I addressed my first research question:

> What role does learning play during transitional experiences for mothers living as asylum seekers and refugees in Wales?

The mothers who participated in my research shared some shared transitional experiences. Yet their lives and stories also differed from each other in so many ways. I demonstrated commonalities and differences in the four narratives I discussed in Chapter 5. I explored the transitions and development of resilience in the stories of four women: Sarah, Irene, Pam, and Dansitu. Their differences included modes of arrival to Wales, their nuclear family structure, their countries of origin, their first languages, the ages and the locations of their children, their educational and professional backgrounds, their personalities, their aspirations, and more. I explored their narratives by taking a whole-person approach rather than through the reductive lenses of their reproductive, caring and domestic roles (Bhattacharyya 2018). They experienced multi-layered intersectional marginalisation and oppression. The marginalisation is created through constructions of immigration status and sanctuary seekers combined with those of motherhood (Crenshaw 1989; Bennett 2018; Anderson 2020).

In my analysis for Chapter 5, I adapted Obrist et al.'s (2010) multi-layered resilience framework - I interpreted my participants' experiences as multi-layered. I

focused specifically on the interwoven and layered experiences of social learning in both formal education and informal learning.  I presented narratives from Sarah, Irene, Pam, and Dansitu. Sarah transitioned from working, married, and abused mother to a single mother seeking asylum. She felt destroyed by her transitions into and through the asylum system. When we met, she felt trapped by the uncertain immigration status of Discretionary Leave to Remain. Pam was violently forced into widowhood and life as a transnational mother. She had been living in limbo as an asylum seeker for over a decade with no progress. She has been unable to provide for or be reunited with her children.  Learning has been a social activity vital for her mental health.  Irene was a relatively new arrival who felt the loss of her identity and life in her transition into life as an asylum seeker in Wales. The primary need she described was finding a new sense of purpose and belonging.  Finally, Dansitu is a married mother who arrived in Wales with her children through a family reunion scheme. Dansitu's motherhood and lack of English language skills were areas of intersecting marginalisation for her. However, Dansitu's story is also one filled with pride, home, and plans for a university degree and transitioning into a settled life in Wales for her family.

These were four women with entirely different experiences regarding their countries of origin, educational backgrounds/professional expertise, immigration status, and motherhood.  Yet they all shared the experiences of living with the social constructions of asylum seekers and refugees in Wales. I explored the diversity of their experiences, influenced by existing scholarship on social resilience and social learning (Obrist et al. 2010; Wenger 2018). Through this chapter, I showed how important it is to

foreground the heterogeneity of their individual and overlapping experiences and transitions because this complexity is not often reflected in the political and public discourse on mothers seeking sanctuary. I explored stories of four women united only in the fact that they call themselves mothers and have sought refuge in Wales.

Each woman in this study presented learning as a critical layer to her transitions and resilience over time.  Dansitu arrived with Leave to Remain, and the right to work and has been able to rebuild a family life and learn while working, although she has yet to return to a profession. Pam has lived in limbo for over a decade and survives through people. Sarah has lived with several immigration statuses in Wales. Educational exclusion inflicted intangible violence on Sarah. Yet learning and education also helped her rebuild her life, starting with social learning spaces, and her story shows a systemic (social) reproduction of harms to her children (Shobiye and Parker 2022). Irene was a relatively new arrival to Wales who felt the loss of her identity and life. She experienced a feeling of being almost 'left behind' by her family. Social learning gave her a new purpose in her new community before and after she got refugee status.

These women's journeys had all been quite different in terms of transitions through the UK's immigration system and the steps towards building a life in the UK. Those differences were primarily temporal and related to immigration status. The legal and political asylum system was oppressive for these four women in varying ways, but they survived, coped, and built resilience through differing forms of social learning. Those forms of learning included a postgraduate qualification (Sarah), formal and informal ESOL Classes (Irene), learning English through immersion at work (Dansitu),

volunteering (Sarah, Pam, and Irene), certified short courses (Sarah, and Pam), group-based social interactions (Pam, Sarah, Irene). The community engagement and social interactions  that are involved in social learning were a core layer in  the development of social resilience for each woman (Obrist et al. 2010; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020)

## 8.2.2  ENCOUNTERS OF MISRECOGNITION AND MISINFORMATION

In Chapter 6, I discussed the barriers my participants faced in accessing education and their perceived impacts on their well-being. Through this chapter, I answered my second research question:

> How do mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales experience and perceive the impacts of barriers to learning?

I framed my analysis using two key interrelated concepts. . Based on Fraser's definition (1998; 2007), the first was misrecognition as a lack of demonstratable genuine understanding of women's needs and capabilities. The second was perceived misinformation based on conceptualisations in Ruokolainen and Widen's (2020) and Furegon's (2022) work on asylum seekers. I defined misinformation as both unwitting sharing of incorrect information and acts of disinformation (deliberately sharing incorrect information). By using this lens to find and explore barriers to my participants' experience with learning, I see evidence of the slow violence and coercion of the asylum system (Canning 2020; Mayblin et al. 2020; Shobiye and Parker 2022). Marcia's, Olena's, and Munira's experiences (Chapter 6, Sections 6.2, 6.4 and 6.6.

show further nuanced harms caused to wellbeing. My findings show harm to social, emotional, psychological, and financial forms of wellbeing stemming from misrecognition and misinformation.

My findings add to existing international empirical literature showing the impacts of false constructions in encounters of misrecognition and invalidation in Higher Education, such as  Oliver and Hughes' work on exclusion as a form of bordering education (2018a).  Such work has connected concepts of citizenship to marginalisation and exclusion from formal education. The concepts of misrecognition and misinformation provided an appropriate framing for understanding my participants' experiences as ones of status inequalities in racialised hierarchies of citizenship and immigration. My research adds to the existing literature and fills a gap relating to women's and mothers' experiences.

In Chapter 6, I explored the impact of participants' experiences that involved a lack of understanding and recognition of their needs and capabilities from organisations, systems, and individuals. I found that misrecognition often contributed to different forms of misinformation.  I also found that misinformation could contribute to issues of misrecognition (creating a circular problem).  The impacts of misrecognition and misinformation formed the central themes of women's challenges, which I divided into emotional, social, psychological, physical, and financial well-being sub-themes. These divisions were made to structure the writing and presentation of experiences that were more nuanced and interwoven than sub-headings in a chapter may imply. The forms of well-being impacts I identified in my analysis were interrelated.

I found that I could primarily relate the four areas of well-being to a sense of isolation that all my participants described. I highlighted the relationship between learning,  isolation, and well-being most prominently in the emotional, social, and psychological sections (Sections 6.2, 6.2, and 6.4). For example, Ira connected the barriers she faces accessing education while legally prohibited from working as a factor in that isolation. She described clear experiences of misrecognition of her learning needs and resulting misinformation within a refugee support community. Ira was clear that these were important factors in her marginalisation, affecting her socially, emotionally, and psychologically. Marcia also described clear experiences of misinformation stemming from misrecognition of her legal rights by refugee support organisations, being told she could not do voluntary work as an asylum seeker.  She talked with me about the impacts on her emotional, social, and psychological well-being.

 Misrecognition, often leading to misinformation, also contributed to a sense of marginalisation and isolation, where my participants highlighted physical and financial well-being as being related to one or more of the other areas of well-being. I shared how Pam felt impacted psychologically by her exploitation as a volunteer, in experiences that also affected her physically, emotionally, and socially.   Lucia chose to depict the physical health problems she suffered in her drawing, talking to me about the connection between her past trauma, social learning in the present, and the physical indications of her psychological well-being. Munira was clear that the issues she faced with her financial well-being also impacted her psychologically and emotionally. Although I divided Chapter 6 by forms of well-being, much of the data could have sat in

more than one chapter section. The impacts of misrecognition and misinformation on my participants cannot be neatly compartmentalised. The characteristics and identities of a person cannot either.

The intersecting reductive (reproduction and vulnerability) public and societal perceptions of racialised women led to misrecognition and subsequent misinformation. Those perceptions obscured my participants' capabilities, capacities and even (limited) legal rights (Bhattacharyya 2018; Mesarič and Vacchelli 2019). At times, my participants were explicit that they felt demonised and criminalised through forms of misrecognition. Olena, for example, explained she felt seen and treated like a criminal. My participants encountered systemic, organisational and individual misrecognition from such reductive misinformation as repeatedly offering Ira, a fluent English speaker, beginner ESOL classes. Misrecognition often results in misinformation for the mother, directly impacting her well-being. In summary, my research shows mothers facing the challenges of misrecognition and misinformation. Those challenges have resulted in everyday, intangible experiences of exclusion and marginalisation that negatively impact core aspects of well-being – social, emotional, psychological, financial and physical.

## 8.2.3  LEARNING AS SANCTUARY

The final question I sought to explore was how mothers might create or find support, a step towards sanctuary, in Wales through learning.  In Chapter 7, my analysis focused on my participants' descriptions of experiences in which social learning had been a vital form of support for them. In this chapter, I sought to answer my third and final research question:

> Does learning play a supportive role for mothers seeking a place of sanctuary in Wales?

I focused on that support concerning the key aspects of my definition of social learning, based on Wenger's as I first outlined in my Introduction, Chapter 1 Section 1.3 and discussed in more depth in Chapter 3. For me, social learning is a social process rather than an individual journey in which participation in community activities develops a sense of identity and belonging and helps shape the community. In Chapter 7, I used that lens to explore my participants' experiences as mothers for their mental health, rebuilding their identities and providing them with a sense of belonging. However, I also found that these areas of my participants' lives were interrelated, as with areas of well-being. Olena explained that her role as a mother was a motivation for finding a way out of severe depression. She was explicit that her postgraduate course was more of a medicine for her mental health than any medication or therapy.  For Olena, her mental health and well-being were also intrinsically linked with her sense of professional identity and belonging. Peng's experiences also showed how she found support and a

social network through informal social learning as a racialised single mother seeking

sanctuary with a disabled child. That network gave her a place where she felt she and

her son belonged.

I found that a sense of belonging was often related to the notion of identity,

personal or professional. Aaila talked more about the future that social learning, in her

case volunteering and the hopes of a postgraduate course, could bring her.  For Aaila,

education provides her with the most apparent opportunity to rebuild a professional

identity and be part of a new community while building a better economic future for

herself and her children. Yadira's learning experiences included ESOL classes and

volunteering in a community project. Through that learning, she could participate as a

social contributor in her community and develop new ideas for herself and a very

different type of future as a mother than she would have had in her country of origin.

Aamira described experiences of positive support from social interactions in her

community. Those experiences had helped her feel that Wales was a place she

belonged to and felt was home for her immediate family unit (her, her husband, and

their children). The connection between learning, personal identity, and community

further highlighted social learning as a process that can provide support.

Some of the women in my research were explicit that learning could be a

restorative process for them. (Obrist et al. 2010; Mayblin et al. 2020). I have tried to

reflect that perspective in my analysis, where I have included how strongly and often the

idea of keeping busy mentally to stay well mentally came up repeatedly in interviews.

Keeping busy is a subject that I discussed in Pam's story in Chapter 5 and again in

Chapter 7, with, for example, Olena's words about the medicinal impacts of learning and Marilyn's depiction of the restoration of her identity. For some women, the beneficial role of learning was contextualised directly against the negative constructions of sanctuary seekers and the negative impacts of the asylum system on their self-esteem and self-worth. Aaila, for example, talked of education helping to ensure she would not lack acknowledgement and was entitled to "*rights as a human".* I repeatedly encountered an expressed desire to succeed and contribute as a 'good migrant', and citizens seemed to come from a desire to prove prejudiced and ignorant people wrong, not to be seen as "welfare scroungers" or "beggars" (Reynolds and Erel 2016).  My findings on learning as sanctuary show just how vital the non-economic (although not excluding economic) benefits of social learning are for mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales. These findings are significant in a devolved context where immigration and asylum are reserved areas, but education and community support are not.

## 8.3   IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, I discuss the implications of my research in three areas: current research, future research, and policy and practice. I then discuss the research implications for policymakers and practitioners concerning national and organisational policy development and service provision. Throughout the three core sub-sections here, I highlight my key recommendations.

### 8.3.1  CURRENT RESEARCH

My research contributes to the existing literature in three key areas. I touched upon these areas in Section 8.2. However, I reiterate the points with more detail and focus here.

- Firstly, it provides further evidence of an abusive immigration system which inflicts intersectional harm (Canning 2017; Canning 2020; Phillimore and Cheung 2021).

- Secondly, it uniquely demonstrates how some of those harms are perpetrated as misrecognition through or by the education systems, institutions, and community organisations in Wales.

- Thirdly, my research also shows opportunities for learning to be a source of, or contribute to, creating a sense and place of sanctuary for individuals, women, and mothers seeking it, furthering arguments made by Morrice (2007).

My analysis suggests that informal and community learning spaces may be where most social learning as sanctuary occurs. However, my findings also show that this is not exclusively the case, and formal educational courses and institutions can also provide an opportunity for social learning as sanctuary. I will focus most of this section on this third area as it addresses the most significant gaps in existing research, policy and service provision.

My research shows that social learning can provide a form of sanctuary in the face of the many harms my participants have experienced. I have used social learning throughout my thesis to incorporate both aspects of formal education within institutions and more informal learning in community spaces. I have shown that both environments can play a vital role for sanctuary-seeking mothers in complementary ways. Focusing on one environment over the other means the nuances and significance of their related roles. My work shows that learning (particularly social learning) is vital in building resilience through community participation and engagement (Wenger 2018).

Social learning provides a process within a contextualised location that helps build a sense of belonging and an identity in a new community. Social learning can play a crucial role in helping my participants survive the slow violence of the asylum system. Most of my participants could rebuild themselves and their lives through social learning. My work suggests that social learning could be even more significant in helping sanctuary-seeking families thrive.

As highlighted at the start of this section, my analysis suggests that it is in the informal spaces where social learning may tend to happen more, building some

capacity for social and cultural capital. It is in the formal spaces where the capacity for economic capital can be created, and social capital building may be limited. Yet, social learning still occurs in formal and informal learning settings by building a sense of identity and belonging. I did not have space to explore the relationships between community and educational spaces in my project. Yet, my findings suggest that bridging the gaps between those spaces can be significant. Sanctuary seekers who get both may also develop greater social capital in formal education. For example, Sarah's (Chapters 5 and 6, Sections 5.2 and 6.4) and Olena's narratives (Chapters 6 and 7, Sections 6.4 and 7.2.1, and 7.3.2) highlight the interwoven relationships of informal learning and informal education. They both describe informal social learning through social groups and volunteering as a vital means for getting back up off the floor or out of bed to function. That informal social learning process enabled them to rebuild their self-worth and mental health sufficiently to undertake formal education courses at postgraduate level. Formal education also provided a social learning process that helped them rebuild a sense of identity and purpose. Yet, my findings also show that there is still bordering and exclusion from those formal spaces in ways that are not always tangible or quantifiable, for example, with Sarah's and Olena's first attempt. Sarah encountered exclusionary eligibility criteria, and Olena was ejected from a course she had started. Enforced resilience should not happen ideally, but it does. Women who can be resilient despite all they have experienced should not be underestimated, but they often are, resulting in mistargeted support, as shown further by Ira Munira's stories of exclusion and financial hardship in Chapter 6, Sections 6.2 and 6.6.

My findings further highlight those shared challenges discussed in the existing literature. My analysis in this chapter also adds additional details and information on the differences and nuances that immigration status and time bring. Those nuances include indicating when and where ('routes') these mothers became sanctuary seekers and claimed asylum was significant. The differences in their narratives and experiences indicate that the recent policy emphasis on the entry route to the UK is not a brand-new policy development. Although I focus more on immigration status[58] than 'routes' in this thesis, my findings show the new Illegal Immigration Bill cements longstanding hostile and racist policy; it does not introduce new ideas.

Sarah and Olena's experiences (5.2 and 6.4) demonstrate bordering education, as discussed by (Oliver and Hughes 2018), happens in Wales.  That bordering causes harm beyond the restriction on qualifications and employment opportunities. Mental health or psychological harm is much overlooked, yet my research shows its significance. Existing research, policy, and practice all acknowledge the trauma and mental health issues sanctuary seekers face (Jerković 2012; Kallivayalil 2013; Welsh Government 2019b). However, there is little evidence yet of a trauma-informed policy in Wales that genuinely recognises and addresses how far the hostile environment reaches into everyday areas of life (Yuval-Davis et al. 2018; Webber 2019). There are

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[58] The focus reflects the perspective expressed by my participants.

no approaches to genuinely recognise the harms that occur in educational institutions and community spaces.

For at least the past two decades, some researchers have heavily criticised education's marketisation and the emphasis on economic benefits (Hyland and Merrill 2003; Scullion et al. 2010; Lucas 2019). In a neoliberal capitalist society, the economic benefits of formal education for formal sanctuary seekers are vital. Qualifications and English language fluency are vital for future employment prospects for refugees and those granted Leave to Remain. Education is a key route from the material deprivation imposed on asylum seekers, as highlighted by Aaila in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.1. I focused on other benefits for my participants because these seem to be under-researched and documented. I am not seeking to ignore the potential economic benefits of learning, particularly formal education, for my participants. I do discuss these benefits, too. A clear link was made to employment when women discussed education and qualifications. However, I also heard about gaining a sense of purpose and a renewed or new identity.

Existing refugee education research in England and Wales focuses on employability, but my findings show that formal and informal learning can be vital for well-being. The image below shows the difference that recognition and participation in social learning can make, with the whole person-centred.

**Image 36 - Sanctuary for the whole person**
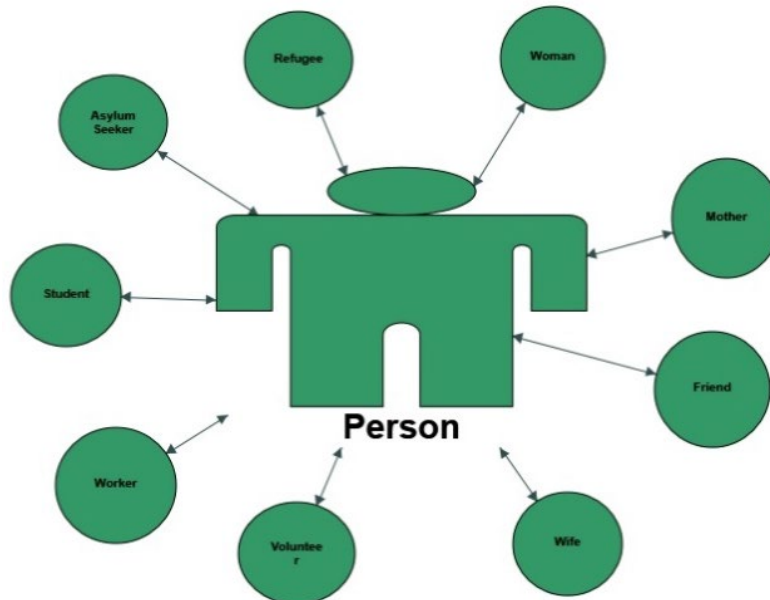
My findings show just how vital the non-economic benefits of social learning are for mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales. These findings are significant in a devolved context where immigration and asylum are reserved areas, but education and community support are not.

### 8.3.2 FUTURE RESEARCH

My research suggests that there could be great value in further investigation and exploration into the potential of and for closer institutional and community relationships in bringing learning and sanctuary together more. I recommend further researching how those closer relationships could support the Welsh Government's (2019b) policy and plan to be the world's first Nation of Sanctuary. My work has explored neither formal education nor community learning in as much depth as possible. I chose not to focus on

just one form of learning for the reasons I have outlined above. However, I have shown that further research in each area has the potential to develop knowledge that could be more targeted and in-depth for policymakers, NGOs, or/and educational institutions. Future research could benefit from the nuanced and interwoven relationship between formal education and informal learning highlighted by my research. Moreover, my research shows that social learning is a crucial area for any nation or community wishing to be a place of sanctuary. My research shows that there is still more to learn and to do for education and to develop further (see Section 8.4).

Furthermore, further research is needed on the connection between learning and mental health and well-being. Across the UK, there is a movement to a greater understanding of trauma and more informed service provision, including in education. Mental health and well-being are becoming a significant priority, with funding for support organisations and projects for sanctuary seekers. Education discourse still paints education as vital for integration for sanctuary seekers (Morrice 2007; Ager and Strang 2008; Chick and Hannagan-Lewis 2019). Yet, there is not much in research, policy, or service provision that genuinely explores the relationship between learning for mental health and well-being for traumatised and marginalised people, not just sanctuary seekers. My research shows that learning positively benefits those who have expressed trauma or depression. Collaborative and ethically trauma-informed research into the potential therapeutic benefits of learning to inform policy, practice and pedagogy could fill a critical gap. My work has been with sanctuary-seeking mothers, but other groups of women have experienced racialised and gendered trauma with whom I would like to

see or conduct further research. As a Black-mixed-race mother, I would like to see collaborative research into two key areas. Firstly, experiences of racist trauma within and by educational systems. Secondly, research using concepts such as hooks' (2009) engaged pedagogy and Wenger's (2018) social theory of learning to inform educational change to combat issues of racism and sexism within education and localised communities.

More broadly, I would like more research in the UK (and Wales specifically) on formal education and social learning on individual and societal well-being beyond monetary values. My research adds to knowledge from the literature on well-being and learning (Hess et al. 2014) to show an essential and under-investigated connection. We need a shift in emphasis as the marketisation and monetisation of learning dominate. Such domination obscures the social (and cultural) benefits that learning brings individuals, families, communities and wider society. I will discuss the developments I would like to see in policy and service provision in the next section below.

### 8.3.3  POLICY AND PRACTICE

My thoughts and suggestions in this section consider the devolved context, where immigration and asylum policy are reserved, and education is devolved. The Welsh Government (2019b) wants to make Wales the world's first 'Nation of Sanctuary.' My findings have implications for that goal. My findings have implications for governmental and institutional/organisational policy. The Welsh Government focuses on education and health/well-being in its Nation of Sanctuary plans, but the connection between them

has not been made. There is also a clear and strong focus on Adult Learning in Wales, where the positive impacts of learning on well-being are recognised. Yet, again, the connections with plans to be a Nation of Sanctuary have not been made. The findings in my research could help the Welsh Government join some siloed policy areas for the benefit of sanctuary seekers, local communities and the nation.

I hope that some of the policy developments that might develop from my research and future research projects in related areas might also foster changes in service provision. Such change has begun with Cardiff University ventures such as targeted open days and building relationships with refugee groups and communities[59]. I hope to see the development of an environment where funding and support could be based on capabilities and capacity, which I discuss further in the next paragraph. The current dependence on a model of vulnerability and basic needs perpetuates and reproduces social marginalisation. Changes are needed to promote equitable and rights-based policy and practice.

There is an opportunity, for example, in the education projects developing from the Welsh Government's Anti-Racism Action Plan to work with educational institutions directly. A focus could be to foster closer collaboration between policymakers, education institutions and civil society organisations supporting sanctuary seekers. Such closer collaboration could help address some key challenges my participants have faced. For

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[59] https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/about/our-profile/our-economic-and-social-impact/university-of-sanctuary

example, the challenges with courses' entry criteria include converting or transferring

overseas qualifications, English language entry requirements, and a lack of or

inadequate information. Targeted and specialised guidance and information provision

with collaborative and participatory (co-produced even) development and

implementation could solve such challenges. The Welsh Government could provide

funding provisions for childcare for asylum seekers more explicitly and for a wider age

range than is currently covered by the 3–4-year-old Childcare Offer.  Welsh

Government departments, childcare providers, educational institutions, and civil society

organisations could (should) collaborate to develop the most appropriate model for

childcare provision. Implementing the Anti-Racism plan should include sanctuary

seekers in every aspect of the education actions.  Policymakers, educators, and

researchers should use knowledge from decolonial approaches, which are starting to

happen in curricula at all levels of education, to review the systems and structures that

border education and marginalise racialised people. I would love to be part of

collaborations creating these changes, but I can only advocate for them currently.

While I advocate for collaboration, Institutions and organisations could also use

the information my research provides on sanctuary-seeking mothers to a more whole-

person approach institutionally. Universities and Further Education colleges could

ensure that there are staff trained in offering support and information to potential

applicants with overseas qualifications.  Staff trained to offer such information would

benefit any potential applicants with overseas qualifications, not just those seeking

sanctuary in Wales. Currently, education institutions focus their service provision for

sanctuary seekers and mature students on young adults and those who do not already have tertiary-level qualifications (for example, the 'pathway to education' programme at Cardiff University[60]). Higher Education institutions could also ensure they have funding available to support asylum seekers with transport and equipment costs. (Alternatively, collaborations to deliver their adult learning courses in local communities would reduce transport costs[61] that are a barrier to asylum seekers.) The option of short courses and informal learning based within or provided by educational institutions would also be a way to bridge the gap between formal education and informal learning. I have listed just a few examples here. From my research alone, there is scope for organisations to find ideas for developing their systems and evidence for the need to do that work.

I would like more done to connect the Adult Learning sector with the Nation of Sanctuary Plan in Wales. The Adult Learning Sector is strong in Wales, with claims it is leading the way for the UK (Welsh Government 2017). Colleges and universities in Wales overall seem to have general community links. There are also clearly strong refugee communities and networks in Wales supporting the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary plans. Yet, these various parts of the fabric of Welsh society seem quite marginalised and siloed. The education sector is not as well connected with the refugee

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[60] https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/part-time-courses-for-adults/pathways-to-a-degree
[61] There is a general scheme introduced for refugees in Wales that had not been extended to asylum seekers at the time of writing https://www.gov.wales/free-bus-and-train-travel-advice-refugees. I discuss this scheme briefly on page 65.

support communities as it could be, even though the existing links provide positive benefits (Llewelyn 2021). My work provides knowledge and evidence that practitioners could use to leverage capability and capacity to provide services that support a route towards some equity of recognition in broader society, particularly education and learning.

## 8.4  IMPACT OR RESEARCH FOR CHANGE

I seek to have an impact with my work as a Black-mixed-race woman in research and as an Intersectional Feminist researcher. The term intersectionality is increasingly used as a goal for research and evidence-based policy in Wales (and other UK nations. However, compared with the US, where much Global North Black and Intersectional Feminist literature originates (Mügge et al. 2018), we in the UK/Wales still have much to learn about Intersectional research approaches and the importance of the knowledge they bring. There is very little research in the UK, none in Wales, on the multi-layered experiences of racialised mothers. There is a sparsity of Race and Intersectional Feminist research in Wales, with no specialists in Intersectionality employed in any Welsh Universities. As outlined in Chapter 1 and again in Section 8.3 above, this has implications for research knowledge production. Those implications are for research impacts as much as outputs.  In this section, I focus on the impacts of my research to date and the potential for future impact.

## 8.4.1  CURRENT

My research is having an impact by reaching policymakers and organisations that work in refugee support or inequalities more broadly. In 2021, I was an Audrey Jones Research Awardee, an annual award presented to junior/emerging researchers whose work focuses on women or gender equality in Wales. My award allowed me to present my research to the Social Justice Minister for Wales. From that presentation, I developed a briefing report (Shobiye 2022), which I shared with the Social Justice Department, and specifically the Inclusion team in the Welsh Government. The same briefing report was shared with Education Policy staff in the Wales Team of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to help inform engagement with the Welsh Government on Anti-Racism and Education projects.

Furthermore, Cardiff University's task force for becoming a University of Sanctuary used this report to help inform and guide their successful application. I am also an active member of the University of Sanctuary task force, bringing collaboration to the group through my relationships in refugee communities. The collaboration led to the Outreach team creating the UK's first Open Day dedicated to sanctuary seekers. The university won joint second place in the Nation of Sanctuary Awards 2023 shortly after gaining the University of Sanctuary Status. The award and timing recognise the task force's collaborative and innovative efforts. I have also worked directly with City of Sanctuary staff who focus on Well-being and Health, helping to advocate for prioritising the connection between well-being and learning in their policy development.

I can see an influence on emerging research in Wales. I have been disseminating findings (early and then more developed) in community spaces and research events since 2020. In those same spaces, I can now see the emergence of other projects focused on social learning and sanctuary seekers. One researcher has directly attributed my research to an influence on hers during communications. Two others will contribute a chapter on social learning to a book I will co-edit. Beyond Wales, my work has reached researchers internationally. In 2020, I was invited to join a workshop on precarity, migration, and mothers. That workshop led to developing a Special Issue in the Ethnic and Racial Studies Journal, for which I co-authored a paper published in May 2022. Following that workshop, I was invited to consult on a refugee education project at the University of Nottingham. Most recently, I was invited to co-edit and be an author in a book on Wales Migration and Diversity with Wales University Press and convenors of Wales Migration Network. I can, therefore, already see that my research has started to fill a gap in the literature and influence new and emerging research.

Furthermore, my research is being used directly for student learning in Higher Education institutions. Some of that impact is ad-hoc, but I am starting to see some regular, more embedded impact in teaching time and materials. In the summer of 2022, I was invited to speak and lead a workshop at an English university's event series with a theme of decolonial research. I was invited to share the (small) ways my work is influenced by and could be related to decolonial approaches as there is limited relevant UK refugee research and so few British Black heritage race or migration researchers. I

have taught in a guest position for a research methods class for master's students on education courses at Cardiff University. I am a guest lecturer at Cardiff Metropolitan University, and in 2020/21, I brought a refugee educational professional into the class to deliver the teaching jointly. I hope to do the same in 2022/23 and then hand over the teaching spot to that individual. I have used my opportunities in an educational space to create a space for sanctuary seekers. I have shared the knowledge I developed while researching with others and hope it will continue.

I have also had a direct impact on NGOs and their spaces. I became a mentor on a Sanctuary in Politics course delivered jointly by the British Red Cross and the City of Sanctuary NGOs. Through that initiative, I was able to guide and inform sanctuary seekers with research and presentation skills. The Covid-19 lockdowns halted my plans to bring that community and NGO work into a university space. However, I was able to provide behind-the-scenes information and organisational support for Sanctuary in the Senedd days in 2021 and 2022. Those days allow Welsh Senedd Ministers and their departments to learn more about sanctuary-seeking experiences in Wales. I also train volunteers at The Birth Partner Project (BPP), which provides pregnancy, birthing, and postnatal support for sanctuary-seeking women. I recently facilitated a workshop for BPP to contribute to Welsh Government research on sanctuary seekers and community cohesion.

Furthermore, I have delivered sessions in a local Cardiff school, on request, about the asylum process and experiences of it in Wales. I deliver such training using parts of my research, with permission from my participants on each occasion. I do not

seek to speak for sanctuary seekers. Still, my visual and digital materials allow me to present their experiences without the individuals having to re-live them each time. (This is a perspective my participants and other sanctuary seekers have expressed).

### 8.4.2  FUTURE/POTENTIAL

Although my research has had some impact and is already beginning to contribute to and fill critical research gaps, I feel there is still more I could contribute through this project. I have plans to increase my direct communication with the Welsh Government Anti-Racism Evidence Unit to influence social research project development and relevant policy and funding priorities. I have already started to do this. I also hope to connect further with refugee health and well-being projects, where I have made superficial contact but have not yet had time for further development.  I remain a member of the Cardiff University Sanctuary task force. Staff at the bespoke open Day in 2022 confirmed the needs expressed by sanctuary seekers with existing HE qualifications. That confirmation came through the high proportion of sanctuary seekers with degrees who came to that Open Day. I will continue disseminating findings through the Welsh Refugee Coalition and help develop ideas for plans and service developments, including social learning initiatives and closer relationships with education institutions. I will also continue some early liaison with Oxfam Cymru and Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales for potential inclusion in future campaigns/projects.

I would like to further produce and publish papers from my research. I have a paper on positionality at the revisions stage with a journal. I will use Chapter 5 (Narratives of Transitions, Learning, and Resilience) as the basis for my chapter in the book I will co-edit. I would also like to develop a paper on Chapter 6, Misrecognition. However, I also feel that so much further research could be done in this area. My participants and others in refugee and racialised communities have asked me to create a collaborative and participatory peer research network for ongoing research. I would love to do this if I can open a door that allows me.

## 8.5  CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

### 8.5.1  DOING A PHD

Starting a PhD was, in many ways, the culmination of a personal and academic journey, but it was also the start of a new path on that journey. I have learnt a lot about myself, my area of research, academia, and my participants. I came into my PhD unsure if I 'fitted' or belonged. I was worried about characteristics against which systems, structures, and institutions too often discriminate and marginalise, for example, motherhood and race. Yet, I found a way to make the fact I do not naturally belong in the world of research (Maylor 2009) become a positive for my project.  I am not a stereotypical doctoral researcher (young, white, middle-class) approaching research in a traditional or typical way, with a clipboard and questions (field notes 10-09-2020). For my gatekeepers and participants, these aspects of who I am and how I do research were positive.  While doors within Higher Education and academia remain harder to

open for me than others (Maylor 2009; Mangan and Winter 2017), I was welcomed into my fieldwork sites generally (not always) with warmth and ease.

That is not to say that my atypical profile makes me a better researcher. I have tried to be open about my doubts and concerns, personally and professionally, throughout my PhD journey and this thesis. There are things I wish I had done differently, better. For example, as an ethical approach, I should plan more for thanking participants for their time and effort (Guillemin and Gillam 2004; Mannay 2014). During the late stages of my project, I struggled to maintain the contact and relationships that helped keep my research collaborative and enabled me to keep my participants informed of progress. While I have formed friendships with some women (and others in the spaces I visited), logistics, time, and personalities made ongoing contact with others more difficult. The issue of stalking versus acceptable contact (Miller 2015) is just one reason why, as I discussed in Chapter 4 (Methods). I had not anticipated the challenge of levels of contact being as nuanced an issue as it has been. The pandemic exacerbated the challenges of the juggling acts I have had to manage throughout my PhD. In addition, I had to change my design and some data generation methods. I would not have chosen to do remote photo elicitation as I did without the lockdowns. I feel I have done the best I could with my experience, knowledge and the challenges I faced. That feeling does not exclude the knowledge that there are things that I would have done differently, with the benefit of hindsight and no pandemic.

I would do some things differently now because I have more experience and knowledge. I have grown as a researcher. I would, for example, have made even more

effort to be trauma-informed in my approach.  I took outside training with organisations like Women's Aid. I read literature on trauma and vicarious trauma. Ethically, I considered the well-being of my participants when choosing fieldwork/interview sites (Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry 2004; Bhattacharya 2007). I chose an ethnographic approach for ethical reasons, as discussed in Chapter 4. I considered my well-being and ensured I had appropriate support in place. I felt I went beyond the advice I could see in literature and that my university gave me. However, I still had much to learn about when to offer choice and when not to, how trauma can impact communication and language, and more (Agbaso 2021). I would also have liked to have conducted a more fully collaborative and participatory project. However, to do what I would now choose to do, I needed to have the relationships I now have (and for there to have been no pandemic). So, ideas for a more participatory approach are now partly formed ambitions and plans for future projects instead.

I also know I have done many things well as a doctoral researcher. In that statement, I am not referring to academic awards or publications, although those are the measures used in academia. Feedback from my participants and the wider refugee communities is a critical indicator of doing good research, at least for me. One refugee network has described me as their "favourite" researcher. A refugee woman publicly stated that she would think I had been through the asylum system after reading my paper in Ethnic and Racial Studies (Shobiye and Parker 2022). One of the men I have befriended along the way has told me that his wife sees me as a role model. An asylum-seeking woman I have befriended told me I was her inspiration for applying to university

with plans to complete a degree. As I said above, racialised and sanctuary-seeking people have asked me to continue my research and create a peer research network. Those are all words and accolades that indicate research conducted well and achieving its goals beyond the academic constructions of success, such as published and publishable written outputs.

### 8.5.2   FINAL REFLECTIONS

When I first started planning this PhD, the political and social landscape was very different in some ways and not in others. That seems to be an analogy both for my research and me (as a person and a researcher). In the mid-2010s, the outward wave of national pride in the multi-cultural Britain of the Olympics was starting to dim, but glimmers remained. Public discourse had created a so-called Syrian or Migrant 'Crisis'. Yet, the problematising of asylum seekers and refugees had turned, in many parts of the UK, to sympathy and outpourings of support following the image of the deceased Alan Kurdi on a British beach (Georgiou and Zaborowski 2017; Guma et al. 2019). That positive support, however, did not stem the tide of anti-immigration rhetoric that accompanied the Brexit referendum. Racialised and racist political anti-immigration narratives have increased since that referendum, leading to the Rwanda Plan, as discussed in Chapter 2

When I officially started my PhD in 2018, the Welsh Government had just issued its first draft of the Nation of Sanctuary Plan and consultation documentation (Welsh Government and Government). This strategic policy plan in Wales followed the wave of

support for Syrian refugees and other asylum seekers that had become so evident (Guma et al. 2019)**.** I have noticed a shift in mood and discourse in and around refugee communities. When I started my PhD, there was hope and optimistic planning. Home Office policy with the Nationality and Borders Act and the Illegal Immigration Bill has eroded that optimism. I have seen a change towards upset, anger, frustration, and reactive campaigning. I would have generated quite different data with participants if I had started my PhD just a year or two later. From the relationships I have maintained, I believe I would have heard much-dampened positivity from participants (and others) often expressed during my fieldwork. The emphasis on the benefits of education and learning would be more tinged with desperation and defiance.

The period I have been a doctoral researcher has also been deeply significant for other reasons. Globally, there has been the Covid-19 pandemic. The impacts of that pandemic on the world, nations, communities, families, and individuals have been profound and complex, and we still cannot fully understand them. My research plan, particularly data generation, was curtailed and changed. I have chosen not to give the impact of the pandemic and lockdowns on my participants a specific focus in this thesis. I felt including much analysis of the pandemic could overshadow the critical topics. I have included some of the impacts reflected in the data relevant to my research questions, particularly in Chapter 5 on learning and transitions. I based the third panel or episode of each narrative around visual pandemic data. When I have time, I hope to write a paper on my data relevant to the pandemic. However, I cannot ignore the profound and inconsistent impacts. One participant, Mona, a woman who had

experienced terrible physical and sexual violence, told me the first lockdown was the worst time of her life. Yet others, Dansitu (see Chapter 5 Section 5.5), found pride and belonging through her work and contribution to society.

My own experiences from 2020 onwards have also been significant and sometimes contradictory. I juggled lockdowns with serious marriage problems (pre-dating the pandemic), chronic health problems, crisis schooling, parenting three children with differing and newly emerging health, learning, and personal needs, and the breakdown of one PhD supervisory relationship. Yet, I can also think of so many positive outcomes. I have forged new and lasting friendships. I was nominated for an award for supporting PGR peers during the lockdowns. I have deepened my relationships with some gatekeepers, participants, and wider communities. I taught myself how to use a graphics software suite. My work won an award, and a journal published my first (co-authored) paper. Most meaningfully for me, health professionals have praised me for my parenting skills that have enabled my children to thrive.

I have written my thesis in that global, national, academic, and personal context. That context has exacerbated the typical highs and lows of thesis writing. I always knew I would finish my doctoral studies a different researcher from the one I was when I started. I knew I would look back and reflect on things I would do differently. I knew the PhD journey would continue the personal journey described in Chapter 1, Section 1.2. However, when I first mentioned the idea of a PhD to my tutor on my PGCE course and even when I enrolled on my PhD in 2018, I had no idea just how transformative that journey would be for me. My research was not perfect, and my thesis has flaws. That is

the nature of being human and being a researcher. I would like to have been more collaborative and participatory in my approach. My empirical chapters might look quite different had my progress continued the trajectory it was on in January 2020. Yet, I look back with pride, too. I have built fantastic relationships. My participants speak very positively about my work and how I have represented their experiences. Where I feel I could have done better, I recognise that I could have done differently but not necessarily better at that time. Those thoughts of doing better are more about how much I have learnt and grown as a researcher and how I will do better in the future. I have always disliked the 'strong Black woman' label that seems to get stuck on me too often, often rendering me invisible.

Yet, my PhD journey has bought me a strength that has made me feel more visible to myself, if not to others. I feel surer of my values as a mother. My learning for my research has also taught me much about who I am for my children and me. That initial ability to articulate my experiences better, as discussed in Chapter 1, Sections 1.1 and 1.2, has clarified the woman and mother I am and strive to be. That said, I started this thesis with a personal narrative. I have included one here. Yet, my research is not about me. My Intersectional Feminist approach centres on my participants (Grasswick 2021), not myself (although I am central too). So, I will finish with a comment about my participants and findings.

I took a whole-person approach to my participants and their experiences. Research that focuses solely on displaced mothering and motherhood would be precious. My research shows that to the extent the first paper I published focuses on

mothering and mothering relationships. However, overall, I sought to research with mothers, not about mothering, and to show that there is a difference.  My participants knew I recruited them as mothers. Still, I gave them the freedom to talk about their experiences as a person, a woman, a mother or any combination of those social categories/identities. Not one participant focused solely on mothering or motherhood, and my thesis content reflects that. Had several or most of my participants chosen to talk about learning primarily or solely with their mothering/motherhood, this thesis would have looked very different in every chapter. My research shows that sanctuary-seeking mothers face multi-layered marginalisation. They live with systems built on constructions of vulnerability and 'othering'. They must find ways to create positivity and build lives in Wales despite the discrimination built into systems such as education.

In summary, I found that women placed learning as vital to their ability to take on all that responsibility for themselves and their children within a politically hostile environment. The places in which such learning can happen are places of sanctuary. Learning does not directly provide food, water, or shelter, but it nurtures and fosters core humanity for people so often stripped of that.

Policymakers, education practitioners, and community service providers must learn more about intersectional marginalisation. Specific experiences can only be understood when looked at as whole-person experiences. They must build that knowledge into their deliveries. Measures to address socio-economic exclusion and marginalisation of sanctuary-seeking mothers require recognition of their humanity and capabilities to be embedded. Support for spaces in which social learning can flourish

without barriers between informal learning and formal education. Therefore, further research is needed to add depth and breadth to my findings.

I will give the final words in this thesis to Aaila, with her point on the importance of social learning for mothers seeking sanctuary:

"*We are human; we need someone to talk to share to*"

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# 10 APPENDICES

## 10.1 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary defines key concepts and terms relevant to the research topic and the academic concepts and theories used. Most of these terms are defined and explained within the main body of the thesis. Therefore, this glossary is an additional reference.

**Assimilation:** a process whereby migrants should be incorporated into society through a one-sided process of adaptation and change. Migrants are expected to adopt the dominant language, culture and social norms to become as indistinguishable from the majority population as possible (Castles and Miller, 2009, p.247).

**Asylum seeker:** anyone who enters, via any means, or is in the UK and enters a claim for asylum as a refugee. The 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, in UK statute through the Human Rights Act, recognise the right of anyone and everyone to claim asylum in the UK.

**Exclusion:** a process of denying an equal opportunity for participation by failing to recognise and embrace differences. Exclusion can be a deliberate act or a failure to have sufficient awareness and understanding to create an environment where everyone's unique skills, experiences and perspectives are valued. Exclusion is considered the opposite of inclusion; however, both are contested terms.

**Inclusion:** a process of providing equal opportunity for participation by recognising and embracing differences to benefit society, a community, or an organisation. It is a process that should include awareness, acceptance, respect and understanding. It should create an environment where everyone is valued for their unique skills, experiences and perspectives and feels they belong. Integration is a contested term; some see it as a form of assimilation. Inclusion has become a preferred term by some. Inclusion is considered the opposite of exclusion; however, both are contested terms.

**Informal learning:** learning that does not involve formalised structures or instruction. Instead, learning happens more organically and naturally. This type of learning can occur in any setting and is typically seen in social situations and everyday interactions. However, it can also occur alongside formal education and instruction, an essential aspect of some ideas on transformative learning and education (Chapter 3).

**Integration:** – a process whereby migrants should be incorporated into society through a two-sided process of adaptation and change. Migrants are expected to adopt the majority's dominant language, culture and social norms but can retain their own distinctive linguistic, cultural, and social practices. The majority population should adapt to the differences brought into their society, recognising the benefits of difference. Integration is supposed to be distinct and different from assimilation. However, it is a contested term. The UK government developed a framework for integration indicators with work from Ager and Strang (2004). I briefly discuss the framework in Chapter 2 and the concept of integration with inclusion in Chapter 3.

**Refugee:** an individual who meets the criteria of the 1951 Refugee Convention

"someone who has fled their country due to a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."(UNHCR 1951)

In many countries, an individual is recognised as a refugee when they say they are a refugee. In the UK and the Global North, an individual is recognised as a refugee only once their claim has been processed and refugee status granted.

**Sanctuary seekers:** – this is probably one of the most important terms I use throughout this thesis. Therefore, I will give a more detailed explanation than the other terms. It is also the term for which my thinking has developed and changed the most and which I may find later that I wish I had made a different choice. My participants include women who have been/are living through the asylum system, arrived with refugee status through an international resettlement programme or a family reunion programme for refugees/as the spouse of a refugee. There are several outcomes to an asylum claim. The most obvious is a rejected claim, and a claim is accepted with Leave to Remain granted refugee status. However, Leave to Remain may be granted with differing statuses – humanitarian protection, discretionary, compassionate. Refugee status can only be granted if the claim meets the specific criteria in the 1951 Refugee Convention. For example, those forced from their homes due to climate change may not be legally considered refugees.  A claim that is rejected comes with the right to one appeal. If that appeal is rejected, a new claim with new evidence must be made, or the individual faces deportation. When a claim is rejected, an individual may be given a 'No

Recourse to Public Funds' status, meaning they are not entitled to asylum support, social security benefits, or employment.

Some asylum claimants initially enter the country on a visa (visitors, work, student, spousal, etc.) and then may claim asylum as they cannot return home. When an individual's initial visa expires or becomes invalid (for example, a spousal visa is invalidated by a marital separation or divorce), they may also become 'No Recourse to Public Funds'. Internationally, those who have been forced from their homes for reasons found in the Refugee Convention or for other risks of serious harm/to life are known as displaced people. In literature, the most used term used to be 'forced migrants', which is what I used initially. However, in Wales, consultative processes from policymakers have suggested that many (but not all) asylum and refugee communities prefer the term sanctuary seeker, emphasising the need for safety, asylum, and sanctuary in the UK. As my research sits within the Welsh context, I use the term sanctuary seeker.

**Racialisation**:  a social process of 'othering' based on social constructions of race where the fluid notion of culture, language, nationality, ethnicity religion, and phenotypes/visible differences such as skin colour and hair type bounds white Britishness. A process based on and derived from colonial, racist, white supremacy. (Kushner 2005; Meer 2013; Meer and Nayak 2015; Hall 2017a; Hochman 2019)

**Gender/gendered:** – This thesis uses the term from the perspective of societal development and maintenance of social categories rather than individual gender identities or expressions. I refer to British and Global North cultural and social constructions of womanhood (and manhood), motherhood, and femininity, typically

based on biological definitions of sex and reproductive roles. I contextualise it as

marginalising and oppressive, where being a man/boy from birth (cis man) confers a

social layer of power and privilege. I look at gender from an intersectional feminist and

critical perspective, whereby gender is a construction of marginalisation and oppression

that disproportionately impacts racialised women.   (Fraser 1995a; hooks 2000; Kofman

2014; Bhattacharyya 2018)

**Intersectionality** - I draw directly from Crenshaw and Black Feminism and

define intersectional as an interwoven and multi-layered analysis framework.

Intersectionality explicitly sees racialised, gendered, and other forms of marginalisation

combined as more oppressive than the sum of the siloed parts. Intersectionality is

founded in Black Feminism and therefore should, for me, include the intersections of

race and gender, along with any further intersections such as sexuality (Crenshaw

1989; Yuval-Davis 1999; Carbado et al. 2020; Cisneros 2021)

**Communities:** Much of my work explores communities. My fieldwork was

conducted within refugee community spaces. I draw on Maggie O'Neill's definition for

this terminology: "a sense of place, belonging and the togetherness of elective

communities bound by shared interests or identity" (2010, p.13). This definition of a

community is significant because it is connected with the concepts of 'Communities of

Practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991) and 'social learning spaces' (Wenger-Trayner and

Wenger-Trayner 2020). These communities build on and develop a shared purpose of

learning, meaning, identity, and belonging. I discuss this concept in Chapter 3. The

concept of community (rather than society) is also often a policy focus for integration

(Worley 2005; Crawley and Crimes 2009b; Welsh Government 2019a), bringing racialised and gendered connotations to the term.

**Social learning**:  I use  Wenger's (Wenger 2018) social theory of learning to define social learning as a social phenomenon. It is a process through which a shared purpose or value (as defined by the community) is created through social interaction, community engagement, and participation. Social learning spaces are locations and places where social learning occurs (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). Such spaces may be Communities of Practice, but they do not have to be, as I discuss in Chapter 3.

**Education**: I define education as a <u>formal</u> system and structure of learning that typically involves an instructor and learners/students based within a formal institution. Access to formal education is only granted if specific criteria (as defined by the systems, structures, and institutions) are met. Formal education usually involves learners working towards a specific certification or qualification awarded by the institution and is recognised, endorsed, and supported by the wider system. This type of education can involve social learning, particularly Communities of Practice, within or across institutions, but these are not an integral part of the formalised national structure and systems. Formalised education systems are at the centre of much social justice debate on the reproduction or the elimination of marginalisation and oppression (Choules 2006; Power 2012; Bourdieu 2018a).

**Learning:** This is a term I use generically and may refer to a formal system-based education process or a social-based process in a community. That is, it is a term that encompasses both social learning and education (or either one).

## 10.2 IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION

The table below lists key UK legislation, Welsh policy, and international conventions on immigration asylum.

| Year | Instrument/Legislation | Legal System/Level |
|------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1948 | UN Declaration on Human Rights | United Nations |
| 1948 | British Nationality Act (1) | UK Parliament |
| 1951 | Geneva Refugee Convention | United Nations |
| 1962 | Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1) | UK Parliament |
| 1968 | Commonwealth Immigrants Act (2) | UK Parliament |
| 1971 | Immigration Act (1) | UK Parliament |
| 1981 | British Nationality Act (2) | UK Parliament |
| 1990 | Dublin Convention I | European Union |
| 1993 | The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act | UK Parliament |
| 1996 | Asylum and Immigration Act (1) | UK Parliament |
| 1997 | The Dublin Convention I | UK Parliament |
| 1999 | Asylum and Immigration Act (2) | UK Parliament |
| 2002 | Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act | UK Parliament |
| 2003 | Dublin Convention II | European Union |
| 2004 | Asylum and Immigration Act (3) | UK Parliament |
| 2006 | Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act | UK Parliament |
| 2007 | UK Borders Act | UK Parliament |
| 2008 | Dublin Convention III | European Union |
| 2008 | ImmigrationPoints-Based Rules | UK Parliament |

| 2009 | Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act | UK Parliament |
|------|------|------|
| 2014 | Immigration Act (2) | UK Parliament |
| 2016 | Immigration Act (2) | UK Parliament |
| 2016 | Brexit Referendum | UK Parliament |
| 2018 | European Union (Withdrawal) Act | UK Parliament |
| 2019 | Nation of Sanctuary Plan | Welsh Government Strategy |
| 2022 | Nationality and Borders Act | UK Parliament |
| 2023 | Illegal Immigration Bill | UK Parliament |

## 10.3 IMMIGRATION STATUS AND EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY

The table below shows a range of asylum claim or resettlement scheme outcomes and immigration statuses with their accompanying s are not intended to be precise legal terms but indicate to the reader the different statuses and rules around Leave to Remain that exist. The list is not exhaustive and is subject to change with changes in legislation.

| Asylum Claim Outcome/Transfer or Settlement Scheme | Immigration Status | Period of Leave to Remain | Process when Leave to remain ends | Additional information |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grant of asylum as a refugee under the 1951 Geneva Convention | Refugee | 5 years | Eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain | |
| Grant of international humanitarian protection | Humanitarian Protection | 5 years | Eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (subject to the reviews) | Status can be reviewed at any time during the 5 years |
| Grant of other leave on, for example, medical grounds, victim of modern slavery or human trafficking, to facilitate care and welfare of minors | Variable but includes Discretionary Leave to Remain (DLR) (most typical) Exceptional Leave to Remain | "limited" – not normally more than 2.5 years | Can apply for a further period of leave to remain. After 10 years can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain | After 10 years is for those first granted DLR on for after 9 July 2012. Those granted DLR before that date can/could claim after 6 years. |

| Refused asylum | Refused asylum seeker | N/A | N/A | Can appeal once and if appeal fails, required to leave the UK within 21 days and has 'no recourse to public funds' |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stateless Person Claim (NOT an asylum claim) | Stateless Leave | 5 years | Can apply for a further period of Leave to Remain | |
| Refusal for an unaccompanied minor | Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC) | "limited" – not normally more than 2.5 years | Can apply for a further period of leave to remain. After 10 years can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain | After 10 years is for those first granted DLR on for after 9 July 2012. Those granted DLR before that date can/could claim after 6 years. |
| Refusal for unaccompanied minor then granted protection under Section 67 of the2 2016 Immigration Act (scheme to transfer of unaccompanied minors from Europe) | Section 67 Leave | 5 years | Eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain | |
| Refusal of asylum claim made by a child in the Calais Camp but family reunion granted | Calais Leave | 3 years | Eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain | |

| | | | (subject to the reviews) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan Settlement Scheme | Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) | Indefinite Leave to Remain | NA | Eligible to apply for citizenship after 5 years. |
| Syrian Settlement Scheme | Syrian Vulnerable Person (VPRS) or Vulnerable Child | Indefinite Leave to Remain | NA | Eligible to apply for citizenship after 5 years. |
| Ukrainian Scheme | Ukraine Scheme | Limited leave to remain – 3 years | Eligible to apply for a further period of leave to remain. | |

Further information can be found at the following websites.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-leaflet-for-asylum-applications/information-booklet-about-your-asylum-application

https://iasservices.org.uk/discretionary-leave-to-remain/

**Eligibility for Student Funding**

Home Student Status grants eligibility to apply for support through Student Finance for both Higher Education and Further Education. The support for Further Education is for 16–18-year-olds, not adults aged 19 or above and the 'ordinarily resident' rule does not generally apply.

The immigration acts between 2016 and 2023 (see Appendix X) and the devolved freedoms for financial support for students changed more than once, with differences in the support offered across UK nations effectively eliminated by 2023.

| Immigration Status | HE Student Status | 'Ordinarily resident' period before eligibility for HE Home Student Status | FE Student Status England – 16–18-year-olds only |
|---|---|---|---|
| Refugee Status | Home Student | 3 years | Eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance |
| Humanitarian Protection | Home Student | 3 years | Eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance |
| DLR | International Student | N/A | Eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance |
| Stateless Person | Home Student | 3 years | Eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance |
| UASC | International Student | N/A | Not eligible for EMA |
| Section 67 Leave | Home Student | 3 years | Eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance |
| Calais Leave | Home Student | 3 years | |
| Asylum Seeker | International Student | N/A | Not eligible for EMA |
| Refused Asylum Seeker | Restrictions on eligibility to study. | N/A | Restrictions on eligibility to study. Not eligible for EMA |
| Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) | Home Student | | Eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance |

| Syrian Resettlement Scheme | Home Student | | Eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ukraine Scheme | Home Student | | Eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance |

## 10.3.1 POST-COMPULSORY QUALIFICATIONS

Until the 2000s and devolution Wales and England had a single education system. The history of a joint education system means the core structure of education in Wales remains the same as England's (and the other UK nations). Compulsory education ends at age 16 in Wales (but is now age 18 in England). For adults who did their schooling outside the UK, tertiary education involves Further Education Colleges, Higher Education Institutions. Alternatives are workplace education and training (e.g. apprenticeships) and community learning that are not usually funded through the education budgets directly, but by employers or specific grants to community organisations. Qualifications and education in Wales (as in England and Northern Ireland) accredited by FE and HE institutions (even when work-based) equated to 8 levels. Generally, levels 3-8 are delivered in tertiary education settings with level 3 being the lowest level (A Level or vocational equivalent) and 8 being the highest (doctoral research degrees and equivalent). The levels of education in Wales, as across the UK are:

- Levels 1-2 the end of compulsory education (age 16 in Wales), e.g. GCSEs
- Level 3 = end of secondary schooling - A Levels  - or equivalent vocational qualifications-
- Level 4 - higher level FE courses such as diplomas, and higher apprenticeships

- Level 5 = Foundation Degree and equivalent - generally FE level (even if some within HE institution)
- Level 6 = undergraduate or apprenticeship degree or equivalent
- Level 7 = postgraduate taught and master's level research
- Level 8 - doctoral level research and equivalent

The core issues with a three year wait before being able to enter higher education are the delay and the fact leave to remain is typically granted for just five years. Therefore, those granted sanctuary but not classed as refugees will have to wait until such a time that they have less time left in the UK than the standard length of an undergraduate course. In other words, they will be made to wait until they have just two years left of their five years leave to remain before they can apply for courses that are usually at least three years long. They may be eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain, after those five years, but that means uncertainty and stress on top of study and no guarantee of being allowed to stay and complete their studies.

Student Finance Wales did not apply the same exclusions to its eligibility criteria meaning that students in Wales who have been granted leave to remain for sanctuary or protection will be eligible for support immediately, regardless of their precise immigration status [https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-finance/full-time/welsh-student/who-qualifies/](https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-finance/full-time/welsh-student/who-qualifies/) . Scotland did not apply the exclusions either. Asylum seekers across the UK remained excluded from Home Student status.

The difference in rules between UK nations seems to create an unfair and inequal lottery system for dispersed asylum seekers. Those dispersed within England now

seem to face a distinct disadvantage in terms of educational opportunities, unless they have the means to make it to Wales or Scotland once they have leave to remain.

In Further Education the eligibility for support are different and, in Wales, only UK citizens are automatically eligible. All other students have tp apply and will be informed if they are eligible.  However, all those who have been granted leave to remain in the UK as a result of an asylum claim (e.g., granted refugee status, humanitarian protection, Protection, Discretionary Leave; Stateless persons, exceptional leave) or who have been granted refugee status or almost all of those granted leave to remain through a resettlement scheme are eligible to apply. Asylum seekers and those relocated to the UK under the Afghan Locally Employed Staff Ex-Gratia Scheme are not eligible to apply. (All others granted protection under a scheme for Afghanistan are eligible).

And asylum seekers cannot  use NASS vouchers for course fee payments

## 10.4 RECRUITMENT FLYER – PARTICIPANTS

# 10.5 INFORMATION SHEET (GATEKEEPERS)



School of
Social Sciences
Ysgol y Gwyddorau
Cymdeithasol

### PhD Research Project – Information Sheet
### Learning Experiences of Sanctuary Seeking Mothers in Wales
Laura Shobiye – shobiyelo@cardiff.ac.uk

**Project**
The project seeks to explore the perspectives and educational experiences on mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales. The project has full ethical approval from Cardiff University and is conducted in partnership with Oasis Cardiff. The research aims include developing knowledge that can directly inform policy making and service provision in Wales. This sheet provides some details of the project methods and approach for those who may act as gatekeepers for access to potential participants.

**Researcher**
I, Laura Shobiye, am the PhD researcher running this project. My interest in sanctuary seeking mothers and education comes from a number of my own experiences – working, academic, and personal. I have worked as a volunteer in a range of roles, including integration projects, a trusteeship for Asylum Justice and ongoing involvement with Oasis Cardiff. I have spent several years teaching EFL and ESOL and I have a PGCE in post-compulsory education. I have a BA History, a MA in Human Rights and an MSc in Social Science Research Methods. For my MA I focused on asylum and refugee rights, with a dissertation on child trafficking. My MSc dissertation was on schoolteachers' perspectives of the experiences of ESOL families. I am also a second-generation migrant (not a refugee background) and a mother myself. It is this combination of experiences that has brought me to my research project.

**Participation**
This project will primarily involve three interviews, held as mother-mother conversations, with the researcher, Laura Shobiye, at 3-6-month intervals, between the summers of 2019 and 2020. The interviews will be conducted in English, each lasting 45-60 minutes.  They will cover the following topics:
- Past educational experiences, before arrival in the UK
- Past and present experiences of education in the UK, particularly in Wales
- Hopes and plans for future learning and education in Wales
- The impact of the above experiences on mothers and their families

I anticipate that some participants may invite me to observe them in places of learning or in parts of their lives. Sometimes, it might be easier for someone to show me some of their experiences than just explain them. I would request consent from anyone else present during the observation, before proceeding.

Participants may wish to provide photos, drawings, poems or any other materials during interviews, particularly if they are not confident with their English or where they wish to show me some of their story, rather than simply tell me it. These may be used during analysis but not where anonymity may become compromised.

**Confidentiality**
Participants will be asked for key contact and basic personal information. This will be stored and processed in line with the GDPR. All research data will be anonymized in transcriptions and in published results. The researcher will not be able to discuss whether suggested participants do become part of the study (or not) in order to maintain anonymity for those who do participate.

**Consent**
Anyone wishing to participate should contact Laura Shobiye at shobiyelo@cardiff.ac.uk or on 07394 176415 for more information. Full consent will be gained before participation in the project. Consent can be withdrawn for any or all of the project, until publication. All participants will be kept anonymous in the results.

**Further Information**
If you  have any questions,  queries or concerns please raise these with the researcher, Laura Shobiye, shobiyelo@cardiff.ac.uk, or with the project supervisors, Dr. Katy Greenland, greenlandk@cardiff.ac.uk, and Prof. Sin Yi Cheung, cheungsy@cardiff.ac.uk.

ESRC Wales Doctoral Training Partnership
Partneriaeth Hyfforddiant Doethurol Cymru ESRC

# 10.6 PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL CAERDYⓑ
School of Social Sciences
Ysgol y Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol

**Participant Consent Form**
**PhD Research Project**

The project seeks to explore the perspectives and educational experiences on mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales. This form confirms my consent for participation in the project.

**Interviews**
I understand that my participation in this project will involve three recorded interviews with the researcher, Laura Shobiye. Each interview will last 45-60 minutes of my time and will cover the following topics:
- My past and present experiences of education and learning
- My hopes and plans for future learning and education in Wales
- The impact of my experiences on me and on my family

**Observations, Images and Other Materials**
I also understand that observations of my places of learning could take place to support the information I give during interviews. I understand that I can suggest an observation and that I can refuse or withdraw consent for one.

I understand that I may provide or use photos, drawings, poems or any other visual materials that I feel support the information I give during interviews. I understand that images or photos will only be used in the study if they do not compromise my anonymity. I know that such materials can only be used in the study with my consent and that I may withdraw consent for their use at any time.

**Contact Details**
I agree to provide Laura with my contact details and to keep her informed should these details change. I understand that this information is required to enable arrangements for my participation to be made. I understand that this data will be kept confidential and will be stored securely.

I agree to provide details of two people who can be contacted if the researcher is not able to reach me directly. I understand that they may be asked for my new contact details, if these change. I accept that these people will be informed that I am involved in a project but that they will not be given any details of any information I have shared with the researcher.

**Confidentiality**
I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially and securely. Any data published in the results of the project will be entirely anonymized so that only the researcher and supervisor will be able to trace this information back to me individually. Following the completion of the research, the information will be retained for up to one year and will then be deleted or destroyed.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason, and I can ask for the information I have provided to be anonymized/ deleted/ destroyed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

**Further Information**
I understand that I may raise any queries or concerns with the researcher, Laura Shobiye, shobiyelo@cardiff.ac.uk, or with the project supervisors, Dr. Katy Greenland, greenlandk@cardiff.ac.uk, and Prof. Sin Yi Cheung, cheungsy@cardiff.ac.uk.

I, _____ *(NAME)*

consent to participate in the PhD conducted by Laura Shobiye, shobiyelo@cardiff.ac.uk of Cardiff School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, under the supervision of Dr. Katy Greenland and Prof. Sin Yi Cheung.

Signed:

Date:

# 10.7 PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – ARABIC

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Ysgol y Gwyddorau
Cymdeithasol

استمارة موافقة المشارك

مشروع بحث للدكتوراه

يسعى هذا المشروع البحثي إلى استكشاف وجهات النظر والخبرات التعليمية المتعلقة بالأمهات اللاتي يبحثن عن ملاذ آمن في ويلز. هذه الاستمارة تؤكد موافقتي على المشاركة في المشروع البحثي.

المقابلات

أفهم أن مشاركتي في هذا المشروع ستشمل ثلاث مقابلات مسجلة مع الباحثة لورا شابييه. تستمر كل مقابلة لمدة 45-60 دقيقة من وقتي وتغطي المواضيع التالية:

- تجربتي السابقة والحالية في التعليم والتعلم
- آمالي وخططي للتعلم والتعليم في المستقبل في ويلز
- تأثير تجاربي علي وعلى عائلتي

الملاحظات والصور والمواد والأدوات الأخرى

أفهم أيضًا أن مشاهدة أماكن التعلم الخاصة بي يمكن أن تتم لدعم المعلومات التي أعطيها أثناء المقابلات. أفهم أنني أستطيع اقتراح مكان المشاهدة والاطلاع وأنني أستطيع رفض الموافقة على مكان المشاهدة أو سحبها.

أفهم أنه يمكنني تقديم أو استخدام صور أو رسومات أو قصائد أو أي مواد مرئية أخرى أشعر أنها تدعم المعلومات التي أعطيها أثناء المقابلات. أفهم أن الصور أو الرسومات لن يتم استخدامها إلا في الدراسة إذا كانت لا تعرض إخفاء هويتي للخطر. وأعلم أنه لا يمكن استخدام هذه المواد إلا في الدراسة بموافقتي وأنه يحق لي سحب الموافقة على استخدامها في أي وقت.

تفاصيل جهة الاتصال

أوافق على تزويد لورا بتفاصيل الاتصال الخاصة بي وعلى إبقائها على اطلاع في حالة تغير هذه التفاصيل. وأفهم أن هذه المعلومات مطلوبة لتمكين اتخاذ الترتيبات لمشاركتي. أفهم أن هذه البيانات ستبقى سرية وسيتم تخزينها بأمان.

أوافق على تقديم تفاصيل عن شخصين يمكن الاتصال بهما إذا لم يتمكن الباحث من الوصول إلي مباشرة. أدرك أنه قد يطلب منهم الحصول على تفاصيل الاتصال الجديدة بي، إذا كان أرقام التواصل السابقة قد تغيرت. أنا أوافق على أن يتم إعلام هؤلاء الأشخاص بأنني مشترك في مشروع ولكن لن يتم إعطاؤهم أي تفاصيل عن أي معلومات قمت بمشاركتها مع الباحث.

السرية

وأفهم أن المعلومات التي قدمتها ستكون سرية وآمنة. وسوف تكون أي بيانات منشورة في نتائج المشروع مجهولة المصدر تماما بحيث لا يتمكن سوى الباحث والمشرف من تتبع مصدر هذه المعلومات. وبعد الانتهاء من البحث، سيتم الاحتفاظ بالمعلومات لمدة تصل إلى سنة ثم حذفها أو التخلص منها نهائيا.

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مزيد من المعلومات

وأفهم أنه يجوز لي أن أثير أية استفسارات أو شواغل مع الباحثة، لورا شوبيه، Shobiyelo@Cardiff.ac.uk، أو مع مشرفي المشروع، الدكتورة كاتي جرينلاند، Greenlandk@Cardiff.ac.uk، والبروفيسور سين بي تشيونغ Cheungsy@Cardiff.ac.uk.

أنا،_____ (الاسم)

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التوقيع:

التاريخ:

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PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

School of
Social Sciences
Ysgol y Gwyddorau
Cymdeithasol

استمارة موافقة المشارك

مشروع بحث للدكتوراه

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**الملاحظات والصور والمواد والأدوات الأخرى**

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التوقيع:

التاريخ:

## 10.8 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This schedule is a prompt list rather than questions drafted to be asked exactly as worded here. I would note these down to myself for each of the first interviews. The second and third interview questions were even more individualised for the participant.

Introduce myself with some background and confirm consent to talk about education and learning experiences for my research, with a possible picture at the end.

1. Please tell me a little about yourself and your life now

2. What is a typical day or week like for you here? How is that different from your life before Wales?

3. What are the main challenges you face now, particularly concerning learning and education?

4. What are your hopes or plans for the future?

5. Would you like to create an image?

*Note to self – ensure the dialogue focuses on life in Wales and learning (any and all forms).*

## 10.9 PILOT INTERVIEWS – FURTHER DETAILS

As I am/was new to researching sanctuary seekers in Wales and creative methods, I wanted to try my methods before launching them in the field. So, I conducted two pilot dialogical interviews. I deliberately chose not to speak to sanctuary-seeking mothers for the pilots but to conduct 'trial' interviews that focused on other vital elements/characteristics. I planned to conduct a third (maybe a fourth) pilot interview with a sanctuary-seeking mother, if necessary. Giving myself that option reflected my highly reflexive approach throughout the project. Ethically, however, I wanted consent for those first interviews with sanctuary-seeking mothers to be included in my dataset if they went well, which they did. The one significant ethical and logistical gap in my pilot interviews was that I conducted the interviews without any children present, which would not be so practical on field sites.

My first pilot interview was with Tamara, a voluntary migrant mother. Tamara had only been in Wales for a few months and was not confident with her (excellent to me) English language skills. I deliberately conducted this pilot as a more 'typical' semi-structured interview, where I tried to achieve some warmth and rapport with a connection through motherhood. I wanted to see whether I would still generate data of sufficient depth in cases where a participant chose not to do the creative element. It was ethically vital to me that the creative element was optional; it was to support the linguistic data 'only'(Mannay 2016a). I met Tamara at her home, at her request. I was able to trial an interview in a natural setting for my interviewee and, importantly, one where the mother's children might be present. This pilot interview allowed me to check

the boundaries I hoped to set around generating data with mothers in spaces where their children were present (Verhallen 2016). During the interview, Tamara's husband and children did wander in and out of the room. I confirmed with the older children the reasons why I was there. Other than that confirmation, they were people in their homes, not participants in the interview process. The interview with Tamara went reasonably well, but I felt I could have built more of a rapport and gained more depth in our conversation. Additionally, I felt that giving her the option to depict visually things that might be tricky for her to express in English might have aided communication and rapport. When I talked to Tamara after the interview, she agreed.

My second pilot interview was with Gabby, a Welsh mother who had experienced various forms of trauma and gender-based violence throughout her life. For this second pilot interview, I tried to shift away from the question-and-answer session typically associated with an interview. I tried to ensure that the dialogue was more akin to a natural mother-to-mother conversation with some creativity added. She chose to draw. She loved the idea. Gabby is a second-generation migrant (on one side), British-born and a 'native' English speaker. So, I chose her because I wanted to practice my 'mother-to-mother conversation' idea with her (see this [blog post](#) for more). I wanted to do a pilot interview with someone who had experienced trauma and had been through interrogative-type interviews relating to (and increasing) that trauma. She is also someone whose work would mean she could give me a semi-professional opinion on how my approach worked for those who have experienced trauma. Gabby and I know each other very well, so it was easy to start a conversation about our families (after I

had obtained consent) and move that naturally into a conversation with the focus needed for my research. Gabby and I talked for well over an hour. When I asked her to draw an image, she agreed but asked when the interview would start. She was delighted when I told her we had had it. I reconfirmed consent with her, and she immediately gave me feedback that she found chatting as two mothers together was "perfect" and so much better than anything she'd experienced as a research participant in the past. She contacted me later to restate her opinion.

I asked Gabby to create an image as I drew the research conversation to a close. I wanted to try that approach to see if it would help provide a focus to the image that reflected the scope of our conversation. I also hoped that my participants would feel more open to conducting a drawing if the course of the conversation and helped them feel more comfortable with me. I knew that I would influence the content of the drawing more than if I had asked for it earlier. However, I did not see this as different from my influence over the interview dialogue. As a qualitative constructionist and interpretivist researcher, I considered my influence over the data generated a natural part of the research process.

My goal was to generate data with my participants that addressed my research questions on transitions, barriers, and support, so my influence on the scope and content of that data was part of that process. My primary consideration was maintaining my reflexivity, particularly concerning my positionality (Roulston and Choi 2011; Riessman 2015). Gabby confirmed afterwards that drawing at the end felt more comfortable and had more ideas than she would have had at the start. Gabby created a

temporal, episodic image that reflected "her journey". Gabby talked to me and created this image as a woman who had experienced significant trauma but felt that trauma was in the past. She did not see herself as currently living through trauma. It is important, I think, to note the difference between Gabby and some of the women I discuss in my analysis chapters. In the image below, Gabby reflected on key episodes in her life. I asked Gabby to talk me through the drawing, this time trialling an approach that would affect my analysis of images. Using auteur theory, I wanted to analyse primarily from the creator's perspective, not mine, as the viewer (Rose 2016).

I learnt a lot from the pilots that helped me with my data generation. I learned that being in a setting in which the woman felt comfortable and starting our dialogue with the common ground (motherhood) helped create a natural rapport without the risk I was manipulating or 'faking friendship' (Duncombe and Jessop 2012). My focused conversational approach prompted open answers that would generate data relevant to my research questions on transitions, barriers, and support. From Gabby, I learnt that a simple image from an individual participant could convey a powerful message that encapsulated and supplemented linguistic data. Asking Gabby to be creative towards the end of our conversation worked well as it ensured she drew a picture relevant to the focus of our conversation and not something outside the scope of my research.  Asking for a description of the image was necessary for my approach based on auteur theory. There are different ways to interpret art and drawings. The fundamental approaches either focus on the viewer's interpretation, the creator's intent, or a combination of both.

**Image 37 – Gabby: Pilot Drawing**
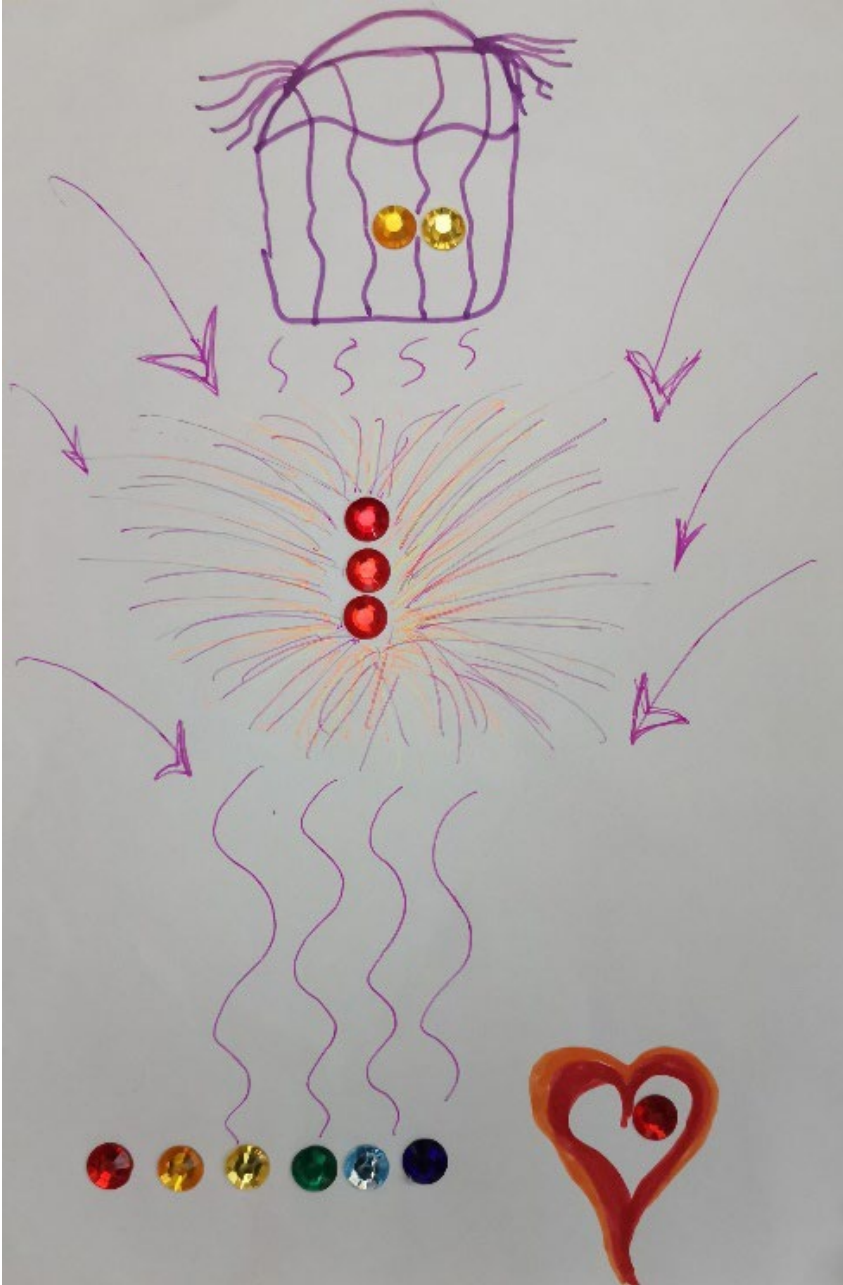
## 10.10 NOT 'STALKING' PARTICIPANTS

While qualitative longitudinal research methods do not usually emphasise attrition and retention as quantitative studies (with sample size concerns), retaining sufficient participants is still essential (Miller 2015). If I could not retain participants, I could not do a longitudinal study as I could not generate the data required for my research questions, particularly the first question focused on individual transitions. While nearly all my interviews ended warmly, usually with hugs and promises of speaking to me again, I knew I could not rely on that. I needed to keep in touch with mothers to maintain and build on that initial rapport and ensure I had a way to request a second (and third) interview when the time came. However, I needed to be sure I did not become an intrusion into their lives or unintentionally coerce them into maintaining their participation. As I said in Chapter 4, Section 4.5.1.1, I could not become a stalker. I just needed to behave a little like one (Miller 2015).

I continued contact in various ways that were purely about maintaining relationships. As discussed in Chapter 4, Sections 4.3 and 4.4, I kept distinct boundaries between relationship-building fieldwork and specific moments, the interviews, of data generation. I tried to individualise contact to reflect the nature of our initial bond and geographical realities and constraints. Sometimes, I sent the requested information or dropped it off at the centre or group they frequented. In other cases, I would continue to drop into the centre or group and make light conversation when I saw them. Sometimes I would get in touch to say I was visiting a group/location and would try to arrange to meet them for a coffee or similar before or after. I also tried to maintain

details of important dates where I could. Those included Home Office hearing dates,

children's birthdays, etc., - occasions that would give me a 'natural' reason for making

contact. With a few of the women, the communication flowed reasonably naturally. We

exchanged messages about our children during school holidays, or one of us would get

in touch to discuss something topical that might be of interest – often, that might be a

news piece about racism or a women's event happening. As time went on, a few

women would initiate contact with me to share news, such as personal

accomplishments or refugee status.  It is important to note that these communications

were relationship-building and fieldwork interactions. They were not part of my data

generation.

I did generate data via WhatsApp and kept clear boundaries around my dataset. I

was hoping to generate photographs of objects and spaces to avoid anonymisation

issues with photographs of people. Even though I now knew there could be

representational benefits of not adhering to such culturally prescribed ethics (Lenette

2019), I also knew I had obtained consent initially with the promise of confidentiality. I

knew some of my participants well enough to know they wanted to remain anonymous

(even if others did not). However, these were just suggestions, and I also encouraged

women to send me photographs they had already taken or that they felt reflected what

they had been doing. One option was to describe, in words, the photographs of people

rather than reproduce and include them directly. That is an option suggested and

discussed by experts such as Rose (Rose 2016, chap.12). I decided to edit the

photographs using Adobe Photoshop as I felt that a word description would not

sufficiently represent the data or my participants. I felt collaborating with participants by including the data they wanted to include and getting their input into the editing was a far more collaborative and participatory approach. From there, I could use photographs in storyboards and digital stories too. The photographs therefore provided me with a purposeful method of maintaining contact and not stalking.

## 10.11 MANAGING DATA

My data management considerations included how to store the data securely and systematically. I needed to find data by each individual, project phase, and data type or mode for critical stages of transcription, anonymisation and editing (images), further data generation and storage (digital stories), coding, and analysis. I stored all data securely on the university server in a specific project folder I created, in line with my university's requirements. I transcribed all interview data manually using Sonocent. I edited photographs using PhotoShop. I create digital stories using Adobe Spark. My transcriptions included pauses, a note of any significant interruption, and all filler words and sounds such as "um" and "yeah". The exception in my transcriptions was one interview with two languages and one interview where the participant spoke a lot, at the start, about her life before Wales. In the first case, the participant used another language besides English and had a family member help with interpretation. I only transcribed into English, translating for myself where necessary. In the second case, I summarised the early part of the interview and transcribed only from when the dialogue turned to life in Wales. I used Nvivo for the analysis of my data. I uploaded the project into Nvivo and coded my data from those transcriptions and the original drawings and

photographs systematically and sequentially. I started my descriptive analysis with the

original transcriptions and images. Once I was clear on my themes and core focus, I

edited the transcriptions to remove identifying data and anonymise photographs. I did

the editing at this stage because it was only then that I could be sure of how I could

manage any potential conflicts between an analytical topic or point and identifying data.

# 10.12 ETHICAL APPROVAL

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**Ysgol Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol**
Head of School, Pennaeth yr Ysgol
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05 April 2019

Our ref: SREC/3219

Laura Shobiye
PhD Programme
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Dear Laura,

Your project entitled *'Exploring the educational experiences of mothers seeking sanctuary in Wales'* has now been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University and you can now commence the project should all necessary forms of approval been received.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be: 1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

In addition, if anything occurs in your project from which you think the SREC might usefully learn, then please do share this information with us.

All ongoing projects will be monitored and you will be obliged periodically to complete and return a SREC monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Yours sincerely

████████████████

Professor Alison Bullock
Chair of School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Cc: Katy Greenland, Sin Yi Cheung

THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
2013

INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Athena
SWAN
Bronze Award

QAA
UK Quality Assured
Sicrwydd Ansawdd y DU

Registered Charity, no. 1136855
Elusen Gofrestredig, rhif 1136855

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**SO** SOCSI - Ethics Office
To: Laura Shobiye
Cc: Sin Yi Cheung; Katy Greenland

Thu 2020-05-07 08:36

Dear Laura

Many thanks for sending through your updated application, this has been reviewed and approved with one note about the use of the audio recording features on programmes such as Zoom, we have been advised that their due to their terms and conditions it means they own the recordings, therefore storage security and confidentiality can not be guaranteed. We are recommending that researchers still use a digital recorders alongside their PC etc to do the recordings.

Kind regards

Mel

## 10.13  DIGITAL STORY TRANSCRIPTIONS

**Guide to symbols**

…   Sections of the priginal interview transcript were cut from the audio for the digital story. This could be interjections from me or side comments to me or it could be where a long extract was edited to fit the within a 2-3 minute digital story.

{xxxx} - words omitted from the recording but were in the interview transcript

*Italics* – word I added because I did not record the words or the transcription note in [] from the original transcript

[xxxx] – notes made as part of the original transcript

## 10.13.1    SARAH'S STORY (CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.2)

**Episode 1**

Now you have a brain that's coily like that it means you are, you're always thinking what to do. Now, this, this, this fence it looks like it's a, well, it could be a detention centre or whatever. Some women are in detention, aren't they? But, you are free, but still you can't go out. … So you are free but you can't go out. And you're always trying to make, to think - to think of what you can do [to pause] to make it work because you've got 2 little ones here, who either smile... Well, children can be happy but sometimes they can be sad and now, maybe, I don't know what they are thinking because of this scenario. So, you can - when I was small we used to  go up on the fence, isn't it? Well, I don't know, if you ... you could go under or climb over but in this case it's not possible. It's not possible to. you are always there. And I know there are people, or there are individuals {who are capable} of just snapping that wire. And I would like to go out, you know?

**Episode 2**

I don't know if last time I was smiling, btu here I am smiling. You know sometimes when you fold hands you are more comfortable. I've put on a bit of weight…Yes, so I think my life in general. I think, um, [pause] so of course I can get out of this. I can get out. I can get out as I like but, of course you can, there is still a fence around, isn't it. … So, I can get out and in. So, I can go out, I can come in, I can go out, I can come in. But I think, what I don't like, I don't like that *fence* [gestures at barbed wire in drawing]. So, whoever is causing that needs to remove it then I can, because I am not harming myself every

time I go. … It's greener pastures outside, like that. Greener pastures means you should be able to make an informed choice whether you want to go and enjoy or not. …[pause] The fence means stuff nobody else understands like,  if I'm paying for NHS and I'm paying for NI. … Why am I paying twice?! Somebody should, you know, should, I think that's a bit, that's where my fence is because I could use that money to support my children. And I could use that money to go for a little holiday because I'm also a human being, like anybody else.

**Episode 3**

(This episode is taken from several sections of the same part of the interview. The carriage return is used to show the different sections of the original transcript.

What is happening to your degree? It's getting older. What is happening to your confidence? It goes to the floor. And that is what happened to me. So, instead of being able to lift myself up, I went back to the floor, and I was just there.

## 10.13.2　IRENE'S STORY (CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.3)

**Episode 1**

There is a big heart. My experience is not as serious as some; it is better than some but it is not without problems but it is not all bad either. On the way I can listen to others and what they have done, how they deal with stress, learnt the language, and so on. They can help me. For me it is a process with support from the outside for a process on the inside.

One day at a time

**Episode 2**

My journey continues. Things are starting to grow, like flowers. The path is not straight at times it is bendy and narrow. But on the outside there is support for the inside: preparation, ideas, opportunities. At the end I'll continue, continue the process. I don't know where to, but I'll continue.

**Episode 3**

(Words taken from WhatsApp messages sent with the photos, with Irene's consent, review, and confirmation of agreement.)

And now in the lockdown, I have to keep busy. I have to keep doing things. I teach myself things, crafts, gardening. I like to create, I like to create things: to grow life to make things beautiful and useful, just keeping myself busy.

## 10.13.3    PAM'S STORY (CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.4)

**Episode 1**

Here, then here, then came here and I was surrounded by friends. …  This is where I started *top* [points at top]. Then this is when I came here. I see I met the cancer people, you can see it here. Then when I came to know people, you can see it. They are surrounding me. … I am still here. I don't know.

Yes, yes, then I find those people in church. Then I talked to them, they will talk. Then they start telling me about, cos they ask do you have family here "no.". "Do you have this, do you have..." They until we reached on that point. "what do you do in the house on this month?" I said "Just sit, when it is Sunday, come. " Then they explained to me that there is a place where you can go and meet people and do this, and this. I said, "How do you do that?" They explained.

The more you interact with people, the more ideas and advices from different people. To meet friends because you don't know who gonna help you. {Different} That's why I told you I survive on people.

**Episode 2**

Because I haven't got any change so it will still be the same, going with people, interact with them. …They're the ones who make me happy and put a smile on my face. So I'm going to do. It's just the pencil? … What am I going to do, which colour should I use?

This is my head; this is my eyes. So, I'm going to put people [laughs]. I'm like a child, baby. This is my community church [pause for drawing]. MY community {word redacted in transcripts}, My community {church}, all these people make my life keep on going.

**Episode 3**

Because I meet my people when I go to church. … Yes, because when I was at church last {word redacted} I was doing {word redacted} practice. People leave me there; people drop me home. So that's how people they make you feel like you can keep on going, yes. But the more you keep yourself in your house, mmm. There is a lot outside to learn.

## 10.13.4   DANSITU'S STORY (CHAPTER 5, SECTION 5.5)

**Episode 1**

Dansitu For me, it's difficult to say in English only. When I come in, like when I'm shopping "what say?" I didn't listen what they say...

Laura: Didn't understand...{recorded as Dansitu's voice}

Dansitu: Yah! So that's hard for me [is showing me her picture, that she's done so far] … I don't know, I can't. [laughs] … But I want to smile here [points to bottom of 3 faces she has drawn]. … But when it come from difficult [points at top] to here *the bottom* [points at bottom] but now it's better.

**Episode 2**

I am happy for everything now. I am happy for everying in UK life now. Even though I am not improve my pronouncuation but I have more confidence to speak, and every night I go to work and I am happy to work to improve my life and my family life.

And work, colleague, talking practice also. I practice that from the internet.

And also easy, I think nursing easy for me because the questions she asked, I already know it. But the problem is the English test. But in the future, I happy now.

**Episode 3**

I got more confidence. … Yes! … Yes, When you every day is work, you see, when you stay home you depression. …  You think about the work, come and about my children,

it's my sleep. I'm busy now. I like busy! When I am more like busy, when I'm come home the morning, I put them and at 11:30 I sleep for 2 hours or 1 and a half, just, I'm busy after that! … Yes, I'm very busy. I'm more tired still. For 3 nights, 4 nights, when I'm work I'm then I don't feel tired any more.

I want to be a nurse; I want to be a nurse. I say that.

## 10.13.5 MISRECOGNITION, MISINFORMATION, AND WELL-BEING

Narrator: Emotional, Social, Psychological, Physical, Financial wellbeing

**Emotional**

Nala: Actually, I must be sincere with you. Many *people from my comunity*, they woulnd't want you. They wou;dn't want you to associate with them. … They don't want you to know you are from my side. … Nobody, and, nobody request a greeting from me. I have to be on my own. I have to go.

**Social**

Marilyn: You can come here and gives us a hand but you cannot be a volunteer.

Gabina: No. We stay home, like boring. Depression.

**Psychological**

It could be a detention centre or whatever.  … But, you are free, but still you can't go out. … And you're always trying to make, to think - to think of what you can do [to pause] to make it work because you've got 2 little ones here … children can be happy but sometimes they can be sad and now, maybe, I don't know what they are thinking because of this scenario. And I know there are people, or there are individuals who are capable of just snapping that wire. And I would like to go out, you know?

**Physical**

Lucia: My headache … gives pain every time. Not going just in one area. Go to chest [draws] don't know. …  My heart is broke because every time not happy. I try to open to new heart - 1, 2 - to see 2 kids. …  My heart is broken but one there … Chest, trouble. … [puts hand to chest and makes motions of pain and difficulty breathing]  … Hard to breathe

**Financial**

Munira: The lack of information from the council, student finance, on their websites, everything... I kept calling student finance … I am a refugee; I am a single mother. … After a year, I received a letter - overpayment from housing benefit, overpayment from income support. … I have to pay £500 a month. I also have to pay my rent arrears; they took the benefit back.

## 10.13.5.1  MOTHERS, LEARNING, AND SANCTUARY

**Mothering**

Yadira: There's little no here like. Different than in *my country*. Children here know anything. … little children yes, baby yes, little. Now better, different. Coming here and pregnant and *people*, helped me, yes good.

Yes, lovely here. Create me life, friends, is good in here. *Family life is good.*

**Mental Health**

Hasifa: Yeah, This heart for I love the people in the UK. And this is one…what's the name this one ….

Star, star because tell something I'm happy with my baby. … UK is star in life. This is where I continue to live in UK. This is 1, 2, 3 heart because it tell me about the people, is very friendly, is very loved together… This star is there for you [points to Laura] *Laura. …* Very give me information. This is heart for you. This is me and my husband and my *child*. … This is for star for me, we're together. [reads] "Nice to meet you Laura. I thank you, I love you."

**Identity**

Yadira: I studied two, three *years*... after school I go to college two years and finish. And after that married and not work and stay at home. … Because me I doesn't like so much design, change idea about this. Now, because when you here coming and start work for cook and see the people happy and this. And see people for something for ideas for

[pause] I don't know why change but very good here. … I think maybe in future open a restaurant and move something. Yeah, I have ideas.

**Belonging**

Aamira: I want to say thank you all the staff in this here because give me more knowledge.  I learned new vocabulary with Belonging group. Special thanks.