

**Precarious temporality:
A Study of Waiting in the UK Asylum
System**

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Abstract

The process of claiming asylum can be long and complex, causing people to wait, sometimes for years, for their case to be determined. During this period of waiting, people have few of the same rights as citizens and live under constant fear of destitution, detention and deportation. Despite the recent academic interest in asylum, there has been limited work exploring everyday life during this period and almost no research that specifically looks at women's experiences (for notable exceptions see Conlon, 2007, 2011a, Raven-Ellison, 2015, Smith, 2015, 2016, 2017). To address this, this thesis takes an in-depth ethnographic approach examining how the processes and practices of the UK asylum system affect the day-to-day lives of women who are seeking asylum. The research not only provides a textured account of women's lives, but also contributes to debates around temporal power, waiting and precarity.

The thesis draws on Pierre Bourdieu's (2000) ideas around time, temporality and waiting in *Pascalian Meditations* and Foucault's understandings of power, especially ideas of governmentality (1991) to consider the temporality and temporal power of this period. It argues the asylum system places people in a precarious temporality, that people modify their behaviour as they wait on a decision but that they do not always wait passively. It makes an intervention into contemporary debates around precarity by developing the idea of precarious temporality and by arguing for a dual approach to the study of lives of 'precarity' (in the Butler, 2006, 2009, 2016 sense). As such, the thesis looks at people's experiences of waiting in the UK asylum system, considering both what produces and maintains people in this precarious temporality and what life is like under the resulting conditions.

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Chapter 1: Setting the Scene

This chapter sets the scene for this project through situating it within broader geopolitical and academic contexts and illustrating how the chapters fit together. It opens with a brief overview of the wider context within which people who are seeking asylum find themselves living and waiting. The chapter then makes the case for a study of everyday life, arguing this is an important site if we are to understand the emotional and physical effects of waiting in the asylum system. Turning to the question ‘Why study women who are seeking asylum?’, it highlights why women may experience the asylum process differently to men, but that there is almost no literature that specifically looks at women’s lived experiences of the process. Next, the chapter explains why this work avoids using the term ‘asylum seeker’, before finally providing a thesis overview. This thesis overview lays out the key contributions the thesis makes to our academic understanding, the central questions this work addresses and provides an outline of the rest of the thesis chapters.

1.1 A Brief Overview of the Context in Which People Seek Asylum

Growing public prejudice towards people seeking asylum has resulted in the British authorities making “the life of asylum-seekers as uncomfortable as possible” (Tyler, 2015; unpagged). As is well documented in the academic literature, negative attitudes (particularly produced through media and government discourse) towards people seeking asylum contribute towards this prejudice, with people portrayed as ‘unwanted’, ‘bogus’ ‘dangerous’, a ‘risk’, and a ‘threat’ to the state (see for instance Mollard, 2001, Speers, 2001, Boswell, 2003, Thielemann, 2003, Malloch and Stanley, 2005, Tyler, 2006, Anderson, 2013, Parker, 2015, Dahlgren, 2016, Holmes and Castaneda, 2016). The ‘foreigner’ has become linked to “a deeper social unease about foreignness and an abiding association of the foreigner with disorder, chaos and threats to existing geopolitical arrangements” (Gill, 2009a; 187, also see Parker, 2015).

Attempts to unify and standardize European Union (EU) policy on immigration during the 1990s, alongside this growing public prejudice towards people seeking asylum, resulted in a race to the bottom with a lowest common denominator approach being taken towards asylum claims (Geddes, 2000, Whittaker, 2006, Hynes, 2011). While policies across national borders remain varied, the idea of 'Fortress Europe' developed as European countries worked collectively to prevent people entering and/or moving around Europe (Geddes, 2000, Green and Grewcock, 2002, Green, 2006). Simultaneously, each nation developed policies of 'deterrence' with strategies such as detention, destitution, dispersal and deportation becoming common (Whittaker, 2006, Hynes, 2011). In the UK this resulted in what Carter et al. (2003) have termed 'institutionalised exclusion'.

The 2011 Arab Spring and subsequent unrest in the Middle East and Africa saw an increase in people coming in boats across the Mediterranean to Europe. While in reality, people moving to Europe is nothing new and the majority of people fleeing from war, natural disaster, personal, political and/or humanitarian crisis will never come to Europe or the UK (British Red Cross, 2016), from 2015 this was positioned in the press as a 'migrant crisis' (Berry et al., 2016). The rise in social media has complicated and sometimes countered the emerging discourses (see Bennett, 2016, Dahlgren, 2016); however, overall media and political portrayals have increasingly separated migrants into the 'deserving' refugee and the 'undeserving' migrant (Holmes and Castaneda, 2016; 12, also see Anderson, 2013). This discourse has focused on positioning Europe as 'flooded' or 'being invaded' with a number of people that we cannot cope with (Devereux, 2013; xiv). In this context, Europe has further focused on fortification over protection. This has resulted in Europe being identified as "the world's most dangerous destination for 'irregular' migration" (IOM, 2014; unpagged). Indeed, in just one year, 2015, over 3700 people lost their lives as they tried to seek refuge in Europe, with these figures looking set to increase for 2016 and 2017 (IOM, 2017; unpagged).

Furthermore, the UK between 2014 and early 2015 had the most negative press coverage of all European countries (Berry et al., 2016), with the focus, both in the media and political discourse, being around the 'need' to remove the 'asylum seeker' from the country (Parker, 2015). This 'crisis' and 'threat' discourse further legitimised the state's involvement: the government has come to be seen as needing to take measures to ensure that the threat is 'identified', 'managed', 'controlled', 'contained' and 'removed'. The

resulting policies, focused on punishment and policing, “set up a division between those groups who can be allowed to live in deregulated freedom, and those who must be heavily controlled”, reinforcing people seeking asylum’s economic and social exclusion (Garland, 2001; 202, also see Weber and Bowling, 2008). In recent years, this has increasingly caused people to accept the need for surveillance and policing of the domestic realm, which has resulted in immigration enforcement infiltrating “realms of transport, work, and the home that were not within its reach in the past” (Valdez, 2010; 18). Intimate spaces such as medical practices (Cooper, 2015) and housing (Home Office, 2016d) have become part of the immigration regimes, an extension of border controls (Conlon, 2010, Menjívar, 2014, Aliverti, 2014, Yuval-Davis et al., 2017). Border enforcement now involves not just the border agency staff but police organisations, medical and social services, and a whole range of other people and organisations. Through working together and sharing information, these have created a network of immigration enforcement which goes beyond the country’s borders and into everyday spaces.

While these policies may on the surface appear to be about ‘protecting borders’, stopping people ‘getting in’ and ‘ejecting’ people who are seeking asylum, in reality they are at least as much about the production of governable bodies (Carter et al., 2003, Conlon, 2010, 2011b, Darling, 2011a, De Genova, 2016). Some people seeking asylum are deported but most are not. However, the awareness that at any time someone seeking asylum could be deported causes most to tolerate being situated in poor conditions outside the normal rules and laws of society (Chapters 2 and 5, De-Genova, 2002). Far from being removed from the nation state, people find themselves in detention centres, poor quality housing and on the streets - waiting for months and years in liminal spaces, outside of citizenship, pending recognition, situated as an unwelcome ‘other’ (Tyler, 2015). This legal position “enforces a protracted condition of vulnerability to the recriminations of the law, and consequently, a complex and variegated spectrum of ways in which everyday life becomes riddled with precarity, multiple conditionalities, inequality, and uncertainty”, creating conditions of indefinite waiting (De Genova, 2016; 7, also see Chapter 5).

This research took place from 2014 to early 2015, and so it was within this context of damaging media representations, negative political portrayals, increasingly restrictive

laws and policies and indefinite periods of uncertain waiting that the women in my study found themselves applying for asylum.

1.2 The Scale Policy is Lived out: Day-to-Day Life

While public discourse, policies, laws, rules and regulations are developed at the level of a state, or even across multiple states, it is at the scale of everyday life that laws and policies are lived out. It is at this level that geopolitics becomes felt and experienced, where practice is acted out and where people take action (Pain and Smith, 2008). Pain and Smith (2008; 1) highlight the need to combine the geopolitical with the everyday, noting how in political messaging, policy and media “exclusionary tensions and fracture spill into everyday life, exacerbating social and spatial disparities, and contributing to the demonisation of those social groups who are at the sharp end of fear”. Furthermore, experiences are not only about large acts (in their case of terror, and in mine of asylum policy and practice) that “are played, repeated, revised and reconstituted on almost a daily basis in the press”, but about how the acts are lived out and made in everyday practice (Pain and Smith, 2008; 2). As such, the day-to-day is an important site if we are to understand emotional and physical effects of waiting in the asylum system.

For some “everyday life has been made to appear variously as ‘lack[ing]’, ‘unconscious, as null or empty set’ (Seigworth and Gardiner, 2004; 147), as dull, bland, and boring (see Binnie et al., 2007, Highmore, 2002). However, it is this seemingly mundane and ordinary scale of the day-to-day within which policy is lived out. While it may be seen as being filled with “a constant unswerving repetition”, a “flattening out of experience” of time and space (Binnie et al., 2007; 515), this does not mean it should be overlooked. Furthermore, as I explore in this thesis, while sometimes repetitive and often dull, for those in the asylum system, the day-to-day is also filled with a sense of unknowing about what will happen, with an unpredictability, what I term precarious temporality (see Chapters 3 and 5). Through exploring the everyday, this thesis sheds light not only on ‘mundane’ and ‘ordinary’ practices of daily life as people wait, subject to the rules and regulations of the asylum process, but also on the temporality of this life. Drawing on Bourdieu’s (2000) understanding of time in *Pascalian Meditations*, it examines the temporality of waiting and the temporal power of being made to wait.

Foucault (1978, 1980b, 1980a, 1991) links governmentality, everyday spaces, the body and power, noting the importance of sites such as schools in producing disciplined subjects and docile bodies. The recent moves to extend asylum policy further and further into everyday spaces such as schools, doctors surgeries and homes (Valdez, 2010, Cooper, 2015) can perhaps be seen as one way the state is trying to extend this power to further control and discipline populations. Through an embedded look at mundane and ordinary practices, this thesis will explore how policies and practices are not only lived out in detention centres, Home Office buildings and border locations, but have far-reaching effects on almost every aspect of people who are seeking asylum's day-to-day lives. Furthermore, through this embedded approach, it will argue that not only laws and regulations themselves but even the process of 'waiting' itself can also be seen as a disciplinary process. As such, this thesis puts Foucault, particularly his later work on governmentality (1991), in conversation with Bourdieu (2000) and provides a reading of the everyday that, while bottom-up, also explores the wider politics of asylum to consider the power of being made to wait and how people 'do' waiting. It considers the everyday ways people live out, live in and rework this time in the asylum system.

1.3 Why Study Women Who are Seeking Asylum?

It has been argued that men's experiences are seen as the 'norm' within asylum policy and practice (Freedman, 2008a). As Freedman (2008a; 159) observes, asylum has been "[d]efined according to male norms and [has] thus omitted to take into account experiences of women" (also see Greatbatch, 1989). The 1951 Geneva Convention excluded gender, and until very recently much asylum policy has failed to acknowledge the specific experiences of women (see Chapter 2). However, women make up approximately 30% of the total claimants to the UK and about 75% of dependants on asylum applications over the age of 18 (Chapter 2). Furthermore, the reasons women claim asylum, and their experiences of the UK asylum system, can vary compared to men's.

While in reality most forms of persecution (including rape and genital mutilation) are to some extent experienced by all genders (Oxford, 2005), there are gender differences in the regularity and systematic nature of these forms of persecution (Wallace, 1996, Crawley, 2001, 2013). Valji et al. (2003; 55) outlines four broadly accepted categories of why and how women may experience persecution and need to claim asylum:

1. **Women who fear persecution on the same grounds and under similar circumstances as men.** This includes women persecuted for their identity – national, racial or social – or their particular beliefs. Women in this category are also often persecuted as women (for example they are raped). In other words, they may be harmed in different ways to men who participate in the same activities or who share the same identity.
2. **Women who fear persecution solely because of reasons relating to kinship.** The age-old tactic of *cherchez la famille* (search the family) means that harm is done to women to punish (male) family members, or they may be used as 'hostages' to entrap other members of the family. They may also be persecuted for views held by male members of their family. For example, it might be assumed that the spouse of a political activist holds the same views as her husband.
3. **Women who fear persecution resulting from conditions of severe discrimination on grounds of gender, and who are at the risk of systematic violence at the hands of private citizens because the state is either unable or unwilling to protect them** [For instance, if women face domestic violence or forced marriage where there may be laws to protect them but where police and officials are not willing to uphold the law or where due to war or other conditions in the country, officials are unable to uphold the law].
4. **Women who fear persecution as a result of transgressing religious, customary or social mores.** The practices themselves may be based on an assumption of the inferior status of women, which can manifest in discrimination severe enough to qualify as persecution (for example, female genital mutilation, honour killings or dowry burnings); or transgressions may be met with punishments so disproportionately severe as to amount to persecution (for example, in countries such as Iran where women can be flogged for wearing lipstick, or Afghanistan, where they can be stoned or even killed for going out unaccompanied by a male relative).

As is well documented in the academic literature, there can be barriers to women claiming asylum (see for instance Crawley, 2000c, 2001, 2013, Freedman, 2008a, 2008b). Not only may they be expected to conform to a 'stereotyped' notion of 'foreign women' in asylum interviews, that of a 'passive' 'victim' (Oswin, 2001, Oxford, 2005), women may not even know they can claim asylum (Freedman, 2008a, 2008b). As such, women's experiences of claiming asylum may well be different to men's: women may feel the need to present themselves in certain ways and are more likely to be dependents on asylum

applications or may not put in a case for asylum until they have been in the UK for some time, affecting what support they may get and the likelihood of them being accepted (Chapter 2). While focusing on policy, Freedman (2008a) notes that women are more likely to find mixed accommodation inappropriate, threatening or even dangerous (also see Chapter 6), and much other policy is also likely to be experienced differently by women.

Their experiences as women, both in their country of origin and in the UK, may affect their experiences of wider day-to-day life in the UK. However, despite this almost no literature has looked beyond the legal field or formal settings to see how women experience this 'betwixt and between' time (Turner, 1995), to look at what people's experiences are of living, and waiting, subject to the rules and regulations of the asylum system (for notable exceptions see Conlon, 2007, 2011a, Raven-Ellison, 2015, Smith, 2015, 2016, 2017). My research helps address this gap, considering how women experience waiting in the asylum process beyond the formal settings of interviews and court hearings and into their wider, day-to-day, lives. This is not to suggest that all women will have the same experiences; indeed, the individual women in my study experience this time differently. Rather, it is to help 'give voice' to women (Roy, 2004), in a field where work that is written in a seemingly 'gender neutral' way often ends up privileging male voices and where men's experiences are often seen as the norm (Freedman, 2008a).

1.4 Some Comments on the Term 'Asylum Seeker'

Part of the increasingly restrictive policies in Europe since the 1990s, has been the development of the legal category 'asylum seeker', a term that implies someone is 'pending recognition' (see Chapter 2, Nyers, 2010, Tyler, 2015). The use of this term can result in research contributing "towards the exclusion of an [already] marginalised and abject group of people" (Gill, 2009b; unpagged). It can continue to reduce people to a legal status that leaves them outside mainstream society, and emphasise the 'non-refugeeness' of asylum claimants (Tyler, 2006). Furthermore, the term 'asylum seeker' not only reduces someone to a defined legal status but, in so doing, it also denies them a broader identity, their personal history and their aspirations beyond seeking asylum. In this research, therefore, I avoid using the term 'asylum seeker' unless I am specifically referring to legislation or quoting others. Instead I focus on person-centred phrases such

as ‘person seeking asylum’ or ‘person who is seeking asylum’: people are people first, so the emphasis should be on a person doing something, rather than something being the person’s identity. The women I worked with in this study had their own personalities, their own life stories, their own interests and while seeking asylum had a large impact on their current life, it did not, and should not, define who they are and was not necessarily a part of how they identified.

Furthermore, I take a broad definition around who can be classed as ‘seeking asylum’. Officially from the point someone has made an application for asylum in the UK, they can be classed as an ‘asylum seeker’ by the UK government and hold this status until an application has been accepted or they have exhausted all forms of appeal. However, for this research I include any person who is engaging in the asylum process in any way. This therefore includes dependents of primary applicants and so-called ‘failed asylum seekers’ who may be detained, destitute or on Section 4 support, as well as people who have officially exhausted the appeals process but who in reality may still formally re-enter the asylum process through putting in new evidence, or a fresh case (see Chapter 2). This is because as long as someone is engaging in the asylum system, they are still in a “socio-legal” position (Dwyer and Brown, 2008; 203) in which they are pending recognition (Tyler, 2015). Even if the UK government classes them as a ‘failed asylum seeker’ or a ‘dependent’, they are still subject to specific rules and regulations that have an impact on their rights, access to support and day-to-day lives. They are still in limbo, outside the normal rules of society, waiting for recognition (Chapter 2, Nyers, 2010, Tyler, 2015).

1.5 Thesis Overview

In academic literature on the asylum system there has been a tendency to focus on the legal process (for instance Crawley, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2013, Oswin, 2001, Freedman, 2010, Peers, 2016), the way public opinion and discourse affects how people are situated (for instance Mollard, 2001, Speers, 2001, Boswell, 2003, Thielemann, 2003, Malloch and Stanley, 2005, Tyler, 2006, Anderson, 2013, Parker, 2015, Dahlgren, 2016, Berry et al., 2016, Holmes and Castaneda, 2016) or a specific piece of policy or practice (for instance Gill, 2009a, Conlon, 2010, Aliverti, 2014, Tyler et al., 2014, Darling, 2016). Whilst this work is often important to help understand the asylum system, this approach can result in a disproportionate focus on practices that can be read as ‘extraordinary’ and can move the focus away from individuals’ experiences of asylum practice: it can cause research to

overlook embodied experiences, the disciplinary effects of day-to-day practices and the way the asylum process infiltrates everyday life. This thesis, then, takes a different approach; rather than starting with a particular piece of asylum policy or a specific practice, I deliberately take a bottom-up approach by beginning with a group of women who were all trying to seek asylum in the UK and engaging, in some way, with the UK asylum system. Through regular meetings, attending events and a range of ethnographic methods, I tracked what happened to them over the course of a year. While maintaining a focus on everyday lives I encouraged the women to dictate the direction of many of the conversations. Through this approach I examined the sometimes mundane and ordinary, sometimes extraordinary, everyday lives of these women as they navigated, lived and waited in the UK asylum system.

Through exploring these women's everyday experiences of the asylum system, this thesis aims to;

***Examine the production of the condition of waiting and life under
the resulting conditions.***

Through this, the thesis helps address Bourdieu's (2000; 228) observation that if waiting and temporal power is to be understood, we need to "catalogue, and analyse, all the behaviours associated with the exercise of power over other people's time". It not only catalogues how temporal power is produced, maintained and challenged but also analyses what the conditions of life are like for those who wait, and live, in the UK asylum system. To do this the work considers several key questions:

- How does temporal power play out?
- What is a precarious temporality?
- What are the conditions of life when living in temporal uncertainty?
- How do people develop resilience to temporal power?

Chapter 1 has set the scene for this thesis. It has explained the wider political context in which this research took place, outlined the importance of studying day-to-day life, highlighted the importance of drawing out women's experiences and looked at why language matters when talking about people seeking asylum. **Chapter 2** extends this to provide an in-depth context looking at what we mean by asylum, who claims asylum and the asylum process itself. This chapter is not only useful in helping the reader navigate the rest of the thesis but extends Dwyer and Brown's (2008; 203) idea that 'asylum

seeker' is not simply a 'legal' category but a 'socio-legal' category, through highlighting the role family and other relationships can have in affecting what, if any, access to support people have.

In **Chapter 3** I continue to lay the groundwork for the empirical chapters by providing a theoretical framework. The chapter is divided into three sections that explore literature on time and temporality, power and precarity with ideas of temporal power, waiting and daily life drawn out throughout. Firstly, I argue *people seeking asylum occupy a 'liminal' space* within which they are deliberately *made to wait* before secondly looking at Foucault's understandings of power and Bourdieu's idea of waiting, to *provide a framework* for the analysis of the temporal power of waiting. In the third section, I turn to literature on precarity. This literature is concerned with both the production of and, the experience of, lives of precarity; as such it provides a dual way of understanding both what makes people precarious and what life is like for those who live under the resulting conditions. In this section, I outline how people seeking asylum are situated in a precarious temporality and why a dual approach to precariousness can be useful in exploring the resulting condition(s). Finally, this chapter shows how immigration regimes and the "fear of return to persecution" (Waite et al., 2013; 26) causes people to be not only precarious but hyper-precarious.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological approach that I took in this thesis: An ethnography of the everyday. It opens by explaining why an ethnographic method is useful when studying the day-to-day lives of people seeking asylum. Through a detailed account of the ethnographic fieldwork it also looks at some of the practical and ethical considerations that I faced while conducting this study. Importantly this chapter introduces the women who gave their time to the project. This biographical information is helpful when navigating the empirical chapters. Finally, the chapter provides a space for myself, the researcher, to consider how doing emotional and/or traumatic research can impact on mental health. Through a personal account I make the case for methods training that considers emotional resilience and for the role counselling could play in the research process.

Chapter 5 is the first of four empirical chapters. It focuses on the processes of being made to wait, provides an in-depth look at the temporality of waiting and explores waiting's temporal power. The first part considers the effects of detention and deportation beyond the timespace in which it occurs, showing detention has far-reaching consequences and

that fear, coupled with hope, produces subjects that are willing to wait. The chapter then turns to look in more depth at the varying temporalities of waiting, showing how the life course is interrupted, daily life is impacted and how temporal power can be made visible, felt and experienced. The final part of the chapter looks at how waiting itself can have governmental effects, arguing it “modifies the behaviour of the person who ‘hangs’... on the awaited decision” (Bourdieu, 2000; 228). Chapter 5 provides a base on which the other empirical chapters build upon: It shows how precarious conditions are produced and that people seeking asylum live in a precarious temporality.

In **Chapters 6 and 7** I turn to consider what life is like for those who are waiting in the asylum process, what the condition(s) of life are like when lived in a precarious temporality. In these two chapters I utilise (and argue for) the dual approach to the study of lives of precarity laid out in the literature review. In **Chapter 6** I focus on accommodation. This chapter illustrates how a dual approach to precarity is useful as it allows research to consider both deep-rooted emotions and feelings whilst simultaneously focusing on the importance of the everyday, often practical, experiences of living (and waiting) in dirty, unstable and unsuitable conditions. Here, through providing a detailed account of the condition(s) of this accommodation, I extend work both on precarity in the asylum system and housing precarity. Taking this dual approach to precarity as my starting point, in **Chapter 7**, I turn to look at financial precarity, through addressing a gap in the literature around the shopping and saving practices of those in the UK asylum system. Here, I examine the interplays between these two precarities. I show while the two forms of precarity may sometimes reinforce, or even produce, each other at other times there can be tensions between them. As such **Chapter 6 and 7** can be read together or separately. Separately they provide in-depth accounts of accommodation (Chapter 6) and finance (Chapter 7) helping us understand the precarious condition(s) that people seeking asylum live in. Together they help build a framework for understanding the nuances and complexities of precarious condition(s) that can be used in future work (a point I pick up in Chapter 9).

Chapter 8 builds upon the thesis, drawing on several areas of work already mentioned including ideas of governmentality, precarity and temporal power. In this chapter, through focusing on activities that were of particular importance to the women, I show that what people do when they wait (how they do waiting) can open up possibilities even as it creates frustration. Through exploring the roles of support and friendships,

education and volunteering, the chapter shows how people gain social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1999b, 2005), develop the skills for resilience, engage in acts of reworking (Katz, 2004) and reduce the precarities of their lives. The chapter also looks at how some women not only 'survive' in this time of waiting but can, albeit momentarily, thrive. In doing this the chapter extends Jeffrey's (2010, 2011) idea of 'timepass' to a situation that is not only about 'temporal rupture' but 'temporal power', showing how waiting can be not only an active process but how in 'doing waiting' the women could, albeit in small ways, take back some control, and reduce the precarious temporality of their lives, and how they do not fully, or perhaps more accurately only, 'hang' 'on the awaited decision' (Bourdieu, 2000; 228).

The conclusion, **Chapter 9**, is divided into three parts. Each part approaches this thesis from a different angle with possibilities for action running throughout. Firstly, this chapter revisits the 'art' of making someone wait; drawing out some of the limits of temporal power. As such it highlights some ways people seeking asylum can, and do, act to dictate the conditions of their waiting, act to improve the conditions of their life. Secondly, it looks in depth at the ideas of precarity developed in this thesis to show how these ideas add to academic understandings. This section also makes a call to action, to policy-makers and wider society, to take steps to reduce the precariousness of the lives of those seeking asylum. Thirdly, it considers the geography of a precarious temporality, highlighting the value in mapping precarious lives and the importance of focusing on day-to-day life.

As such, this thesis both adds to our understanding of the lives of women who are seeking asylum, as well as to academic discussions on waiting, precarity, temporality and temporal power.

Chapter 2: Mapping out the Precarious Landscape of Asylum Support in the UK

The laws, policies and guidelines of the UK asylum system are central to the lives of people seeking asylum. When in the asylum process, people find themselves needing to navigate and comply with this complex set of rules. This can affect where someone can live, what type of accommodation they may be able to live in and what, if any, access to support they may receive. These laws and regulations, policies and practices, affect many aspects of day-to-day life. In mapping this out here, I provide some background and context for the rest of this thesis. Firstly, I provide a way of placing the lives of my participants in the landscape of asylum. To do this I provide information about what asylum is, who claims asylum, a brief overview of the UK asylum process and how someone can access government support (focusing throughout on areas of particular relevance to the experiences of the women in this study). Secondly, it outlines one of the contour lines that can be traced through this thesis: the way the category of ‘asylum seeker’ has become a socio-legal categorisation and how, as a result, people who are seeking asylum find themselves in a precarious situation. Thirdly, it provides a foundational context on which to understand the empirical material.

2.1 What is Asylum?

In the wake of the Second World War in 1951, 144 states came together to write the Geneva Convention on the rights of refugees (referred to here as the Geneva Convention) (UNHCR, 1951) it sets out under what grounds an individual can seek refuge. It states a person can seek refuge in a country if:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for any reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside his [sic] country of origin and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [sic] the protection of that country; or who, having a nationality and being outside the country of his [sic] former habitual residency as a result of such

events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.
(UNHCR, 1979)

The UK ratified the Geneva Convention on 11 March 1954¹ which resulted in the UK having a legal duty to offer protection to those that fall within the above definition. Further to this, the UK is also subject to a range of other treaties and protocols (see Asylum Aid, 2016, ICRC, 2016), national legislation and guidelines (Home Office, 2013b, Home Office, 2016b) aimed at offering further clarity as to what is included in the Geneva Convention and setting out the terms and conditions under which refuge can be sought. As some women, including some in this study, claim asylum due to gender-based persecution, the way gender has, and is, dealt with under the Geneva Convention can impact on their chances of gaining refuge.

It was suggested 'sex' should be included in the 1951 Geneva Convention alongside the other protected characteristics; however, this was dismissed, and the Geneva Convention was written in 'gender neutral' language. As a result it was constructed around the concept of "the male political refugee" with "gender-based persecution omitted as a determining factor for receiving refugee status" resulting in the stories of women refugees being largely "ignored, overlooked and marginalized" (Smith, 2016; 57).

In 1984 the European Parliament finally recognised women who "face harsh or inhumane treatment because they are considered to have transgressed the social norms of the country" as potentially being part of a particular social group and therefore entitled to protection under the Geneva Convention (Freedman, 2010; 178). A year later, the same principles were accepted by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) executive committee; however, it was not until 1991, when the UNHCR produced *Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women*, that it acted upon this recommendation (Freedman, 2010). At national level, the adoption of gender sensitive guidelines has varied greatly. This is in part due to countries moving towards more restrictive refugee policies, particularly within Europe and North America (Chapter 1, Law, 2010). In the UK, the latest policy and guidance on *Gender issues in asylum claims* was released in 2010 (Home Office, 2010b). It provides a comprehensive guide on how the UK border agency should carry out asylum claims with regard to gender. This is used alongside country information and guidance documents to determine whether someone has grounds for

¹ The UK also adopted the 1967 protocol in 1968. This extended the Geneva Convention by removing almost all temporal and geographical limits (UNHCR 2016, the 1951 Refugee Convention, UNHCR)

asylum in the UK (Home Office, 2015e). However, this country information has been criticised for over-generalising women's experiences, often being out-of-date or not fully understanding local or regional threats, which can result in cases of gender-based persecution being dismissed (RWRP, 2013). This not only increases the likelihood that these women will not receive refugee status but that they will enter the often-long appeals process discussed below.

A second element of the move within Europe and North America towards more restrictive policies and practices around offering refuge has been the development of the category 'asylum seeker' (Tyler, 2015). As Tyler (2015; unpagged) explains:

Whilst the term "refugee" has a specific international legal genealogy, the term "asylum-seeker" only began to gain significant political, legal and popular currency in the UK in the 1990s. In contrast to the term refugee, which names a (legal) status arrived at, the concept of the asylum-seeker invokes the non-status of a person who has not been recognized as a refugee. Asylum-seekers are thus people paradoxically classified as pending recognition as a class. It was by inscribing the category of asylum-seeker in British law, through the enactment of a series of punitive asylum laws and policies, and through the simultaneous constitution of the figure of the bogus asylum-seeker in public culture, that Britain was able to manoeuvre around the rights of the refugee and its international obligations as a signatory to the 1951 Convention.

In the UK, the person now has the status of 'asylum seeker' if they have applied for refuge under the Geneva Convention, and remain categorised as an 'asylum seeker' for as long as their application or an appeal against refusal of an application is pending (Mitchell, 2006). Only if an application is successful is the person given 'refugee' status (Mitchell, 2006) and this initially only gives them 'leave to remain' in the UK for five years, after which they can apply to settle in the UK (Home Office, 2015d). When an asylum case is not successful, a person can, in very limited circumstances, also be given 'leave to remain' on humanitarian grounds under the same conditions as refugee status. Occasionally people are also given permission to stay in the UK for other reasons; however, this is very rare and when this is given there is no guarantee as to how long someone can stay or if they can eventually settle in the UK (Home Office, 2015d).

The status 'asylum seeker' has in effect been developed and utilised to justify placing people in a 'betwixt and between' state (Turner, 1995), outside the normal rules and

regulations of society, in a state of suspended recognition (Nyers, 2010). As Gill (2009b; unpagged) notes:

The 'asylum seeker' is a figure defined in law in order to facilitate government-level avoidance of humanitarian obligations by emphasising the non-refugeeness of asylum claimants (Tyler, 2006). This group is identified as supplicant to the state, positioning the state itself as a legitimate arbiter. It is in this sense that asylum seekers suffer a degree of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011) – wishing to be recognised as a refugee while nevertheless subject to state-defined discourses, whatever the outcome.

They have what Dwyer and Brown (2008; 203) term a “socio-legal” status, as through legislative changes a “long established link between immigration/residency status and welfare entitlement” has been developed. It is a legal status that has social implications (Dwyer and Brown, 2008). I will now turn to provide some demographic information about who claims asylum, before looking in more depth at the asylum process itself and the regulations that create this socio-legal state.

2.2 Who Claims Asylum: Demographic and Statistical Information

The UK government releases statistics on migration and asylum quarterly with gender-specific statistics drawn out annually in August. This section draws from these reports along with analysis and other statistics from asylum organisations. It primarily focuses on the data from 2014 and 2015, as this was the period when fieldwork for this project took place; however, in order to place this within the context of the wider asylum debate, it also draws out key trends.

In 2014 there were 25,033 applications for asylum in the UK, increasing by 29% to 32,414 in 2015 (Refugee Council, 2016b; 1). This is in line with the year-on-year increase since 2010. However, this increase was considerably larger than in previous years; the previous four-year average being just below 9% (Refugee Council, 2016b; 1). In the year of my study, people claimed asylum from a wide range of countries. Top country claimants for 2015, in order, were: Eritrea, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Albania, Bangladesh, and India. The number of people seeking asylum increased considerably from Sudan (by over 100%) and Iran (by 290%) between 2014 and 2015 (Refugee Council, 2016b). With the exceptions of Pakistan (decreasing by 10%) and Albania (decreasing by 5%), all the top ten countries have seen a significant increase. While over the past five

years there has been year-on-year variation which countries appear in the top 10, Eritrea, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh have consistently fallen within the top ten country of origins of asylum claimants (Refugee Council, 2016b). The proportion of claimants to the UK that are women has stayed stable throughout this period at approximately 30%. However, approximately 75% of asylum applicants' dependants over the age of 18 are also women and these are not always represented in national statistics (Blinder, 2014). Dependents are family members who do not claim asylum themselves, but they experience the same challenges and are treated almost identically to applicants during the asylum process. Women entering the asylum system are also more likely to have dependents under the age of 18 with them (Blinder, 2014).

The UK government does not publish data on the pre-migration economic status of asylum claimants; however, eight out of ten refugees are hosted by low-income countries, with the vast majority not having the resources to come to the UK (or other wealthy countries) on their own (British Red Cross, 2016). This is because, firstly, not everyone is aware they can claim asylum in the UK and secondly, it is only those who can afford to get here who can claim asylum (Clark, 2002). Morrison et al. (2001) explain that "It is the poorest and most marginalised populations around the world that are least able to pay the price" of getting to Europe (also see Holmes and Castaneda, 2016). Furthermore, only about 10% of those claiming asylum claim at ports or other points of entry, with the vast majority of people seeking asylum having already successfully (often legally) entered the UK before claiming (Refugee Council, 2016b).

In noting this, I in no way mean to suggest those that come to the UK do not 'deserve' to claim asylum, as the popular discourse so often suggests (Chapter 1, Anderson, 2013, Devereux, 2013, Holmes and Castaneda, 2016). Rather, I highlight it to try and help provide some context to this research. I also note it to emphasise that the vast majority of people who need to seek refuge from war, natural disaster or another personal, political and/or humanitarian crisis never come to the UK. The so-called 'migrant crisis', or more accurately 'human crisis', is happening far less in the UK than in other parts of the world. This discourse that is used to construct "the figure of the bogus asylum-seeker in public culture", that is used to justify exclusionary asylum policy and practice that my participants, and other people who are seeking asylum, find themselves having to live in, and cope with (Tyler, 2015; unpagged), can, through a quick glance at the statistics, be seen as unjustified. Indeed, the total number of refugees in the UK, that is all the people

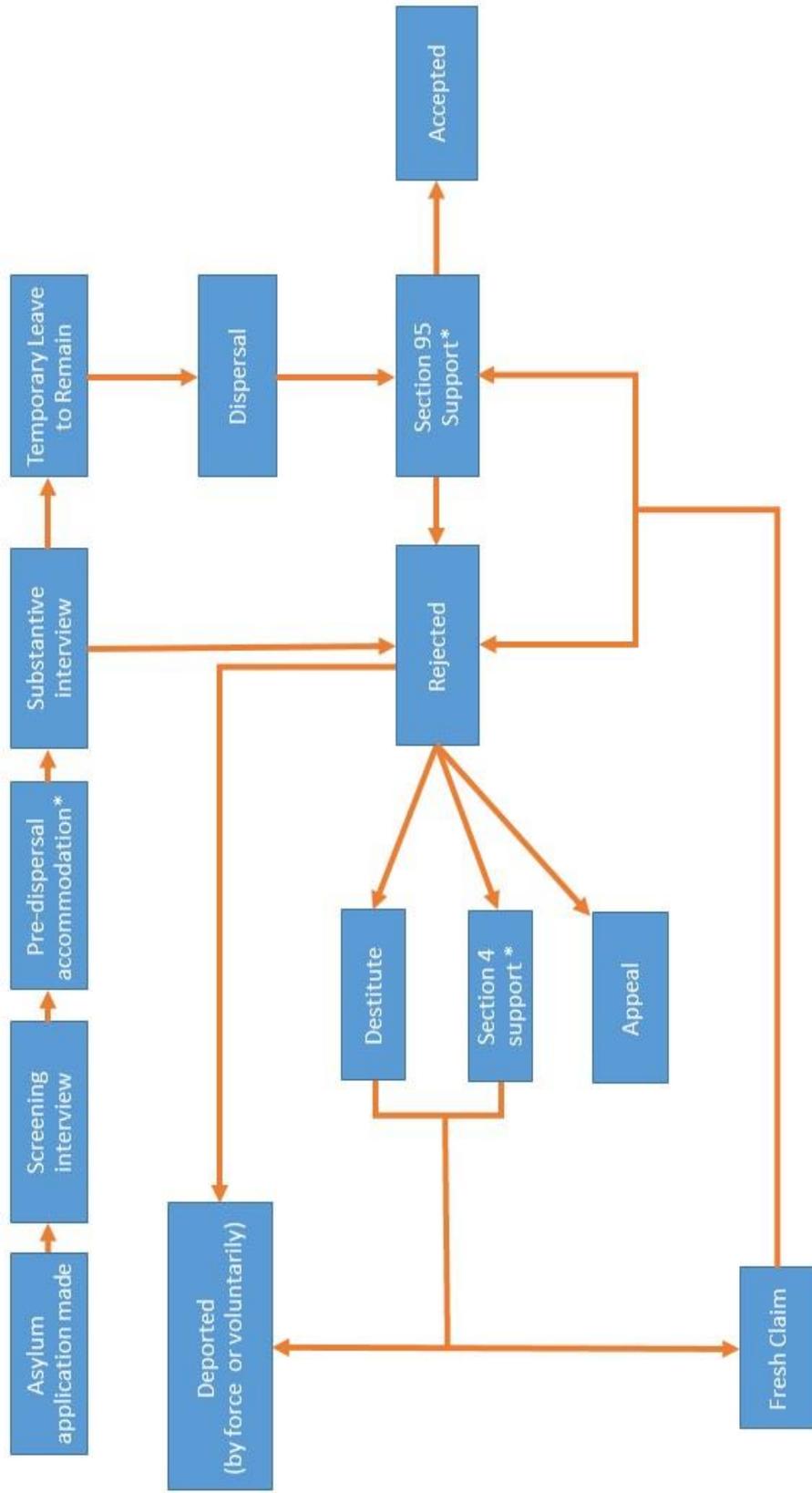
that have been granted asylum at any time in history, and are still alive and live in the UK was, in 2016, only 0.18 % of the UK population (British Red Cross, 2016). This can hardly be read as 'getting flooded' or 'being invaded' with a number of people that we cannot cope with (Devereux, 2013; xiv).

2.3 A Brief Overview of the UK Asylum Process

Diagram 1 highlights that the asylum system is not a linear process and it can be relatively complex. Almost half of asylum applications take more than six months for an initial decision to be made and there is currently a backlog in asylum applications (Refugee Council, 2015a, Home Office, 2015g). Furthermore, approximately 75% of people seeking asylum who are not granted asylum during the initial application will enter an appeals process that can last months or in some cases years (Refugee Council, 2014, 2016b), with women particularly having a higher success rate at the appeal stages (Refugee Council, 2014). However, the appeals can be a complex process often involving different stages and tribunals (Asylum Aid, 2016, Home Office, 2016a) and appeals lengthen the amount of time people wait in the asylum process. Furthermore, as many of the cases that go to appeal are successful, this suggests that the initial decisions are often wrong, and people are held in the asylum system much longer than necessary. Throughout this thesis I look at how people cope with, and navigate, this complex process. For instance, in Chapter 5 I look at the importance people put on attending appointments and how the waiting process can impact the rhythms of daily life and in Chapter 8 I look at how support networks help people learn about and navigate this system.

Diagram 1 shows there are two ways someone can officially leave the asylum process: through being accepted (this could be through the granting of refugee status or being given 'leave to remain' on humanitarian or other grounds) or through deportation, either by force or voluntarily (Mitchell, 2006, Home Office, 2016e). Thus, if a person has had their asylum case refused (and has not been given permission to stay in the UK for other reasons such as humanitarian grounds) they are not entitled to work and would usually be expected by the government to return to their country of origin (Home Office, 2014c). However, as Diagram 1 shows, people can, and do, put in a fresh claim and therefore can find themselves re-entering the asylum process even after a case has been rejected. People may also leave the asylum system at any point through choosing to disengage with the process. This is more likely to happen after someone feels they have exhausted

Diagram 1: UK Asylum System



*Accommodation and support is subject to a person meeting the destitution test and other conditions.

all the options and have lost hope in the process (see Chapter 5). As people can, and occasionally do, disengage with the process, this is used to justify the government's powers to detain someone at any time.

2.3.1 Detention

A 2015 cross-parliamentary report on detention stated “detention is currently used disproportionately frequently, resulting in too many instances of detention” (Teather, 2015; 9). The UK is the only European country that does not have a maximum amount of time that an adult can be detained and it has also been criticised for its ability to detain a person at any time, without them having committed a crime (Gower, 2014, Teather, 2015, Detention Action, 2016). There are a variety of reasons the government may be able to detain someone including simply having a ‘belief’ someone ‘may’ disengage with the asylum system (Detention Action, 2016). In Chapter 5 I look at the effects of this detainability, both on those who are detained and in regulating others who are seeking asylum.

Detention involves holding people in secure centres that have been described as “similar to prisons” and can be run by either the prison service or private security firms (Detention Action, 2016; unpagged). In 2015, there were thirteen detention centres in use (known as Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs), or Short Term Holding Facilities (STHFs) accommodating up to 3800 people (Detention Action, 2016). Some detention centres are exclusively for men while others are mixed. Yarl's Wood detention centre is the main place where women are held prior to removals (Detention Action, 2016).

In recent years there have been several reports that have criticised the detention of women, including reports that highlight problems specifically with Yarl's Wood detention centre (see for instance Anonymous, 2009, Girma et al., 2015). The key concern has been around the detention of women who have experienced sexual assault and/or gender-based violence, the detention of pregnant women and the appropriateness and action of male security staff, with reports highlighting sexual assaults within Yarl's Wood (Girma et al., 2015). One recent change that has come about as a result of the focus on women in detention is pregnant women will no longer be able to be detained beyond 72 hours (May, 2016, Refugee Council, 2016a).

Another area of concern is around the detention of children (see for instance Jon, 2011, Farmer, 2013, Tyler et al., 2014, Stone, 2016). The UK government announced that child

detention would end in 2010 and in 2012 developed new guidelines for the removal of families with children (Refugee Council, 2015b). However, in practice, children are still being detained with 99 children detained in 2014 - just under 60% of the children had a link to the asylum process and 68 were under the age of 11 (Refugee Council, 2015b; 3). Although any detention should be in “family friendly accommodation” for a maximum of “72 hours before their departure” from the UK, the government has retained the right to, “in exceptional cases”, extend this to one week with authority from a Minister (Gower, 2014; 4). This, then, is not the end of child detention but merely a shift in the way it is delivered (see Tyler et al., 2014). Furthermore, as I will show in Chapter 5, even a short period of detention can be a traumatic experience, particularly for a child.

2.4 Access to the Means to Survive

At the outset of this research, people seeking asylum were not allowed to work; however, the rules around work changed during the study. The government announced in February 2014 that those who had been in the asylum system for more than twelve months (meaning only those who have a case pending or/and an appeal pending for more than twelve months) were to be allowed to request permission to work, that may in some limited circumstances be granted (Home Office, 2014b). The first line on their webpage outlining the changes states, “You will not normally be allowed to work while we consider your asylum application, except in these limited circumstances”, making it clear that this is still very much considered the exception (Home Office, 2014b; unpagged). Furthermore, without the right to work for the first twelve months, the right to work in any periods of ‘refused’ application, and with only very limited rights to work the rest of the time, the reality is that most people are not able, or are not allowed, to work while seeking asylum (Doyle, 2014, Basedow and Doyle, 2016). This means that the effects of these changes were not felt by any participants in this study, or indeed most people in the asylum system. Most people who are seeking asylum still find themselves given little to no choice but to look to the state or charity to meet their basic needs (see Mayblin, 2014).

This section will outline who can access government support, how this can change and what limited support someone may receive. Here I provide an outline of what the laws and regulations are in order to provide a basic understanding for the rest of the chapters in this thesis. In so doing, I draw out that the status ‘asylum seeker’ is not merely a legal

status but, as Dwyer and Brown (2008; 203) note, a socio-legal status due to its link with welfare support, and, I would add, family structures.

2.4.1 Who can Access Support?

The UK government has a duty under Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (referred to as Section 95) to meet people seeking asylum's 'essential living needs' (Gower, 2015; 5). However, in order to be considered for support, the person must have applied for asylum and satisfy the 'destitution test'. Section 95(3) of the 1999 Act defines destitution:

For the purposes of this section, a person is destitute if—

- a) he [sic] does not have adequate accommodation or any means of obtaining it (whether or not his [sic] other essential living needs are met); or
- b) he [sic] has adequate accommodation or the means of obtaining it, but cannot meet his [sic] other essential living needs.

However, there are some exceptions for families, people with special needs and cases where a refusal of support would be a breach of the individual's human rights (Gower, 2015, Home Office, 2016c). In almost all cases, this means a person has to have no money and/or accommodation or any chance of attaining it within the next fortnight if they are to be considered for support (Regulations, 2002, Gower, 2015). They must also, under Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, have applied for asylum 'as soon as reasonably practicable' in order to be considered for Section 95 support (Gower, 2015; 10, Home Office, 2016c). This then opens up the possibility that someone could be denied support if the government did not feel they applied for asylum quickly enough; a particularly problematic practice as people often do not know what asylum is, or that they can apply for it, until after they have arrived in the UK.

A person who does not meet the above criteria may also be able to apply for support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (referred to as Section 4) which is sometimes known as 'hard case support'. In order to be entitled to Section 4 support, a person who has had a refusal on their asylum application and appears to be destitute (as defined above) must also satisfy one or more of the following criteria (Home Office, 2015b):

- a) The person is taking all reasonable steps to leave the UK or place themselves in a position in which they are able to leave the UK. This could include complying with attempts to obtain a travel document to facilitate departure.
- b) The person is unable to leave the UK by reason of a physical impediment to travel or for some other medical reason.
- c) The person is unable to leave the UK because in the opinion of the Secretary of State there is currently no viable route of return available.
- d) The person has made an application in Scotland for judicial review of a decision in relation to their asylum claim or, in England and Wales or Northern Ireland, has applied for such a judicial review and been granted permission or leave to proceed.
- e) The provision of accommodation is necessary for the purpose of avoiding a breach of a person's Convention rights, within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Those who do not meet the criteria are not normally entitled to any support. However, when someone is under the age of 18, or has a dependent under the age of 18, the government also has to consider Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. This "requires the Home Office to carry out its functions in a way that takes into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK" and while this should ensure the interests of the child are "made a primary" concern they are "not the only consideration" (Home Office, 2015b). In practical terms, this means that when someone under the age of 18 is involved, some support is normally offered although the level and type of support may vary, and the government may also choose not to give this support.

As can be seen, not everyone is entitled to government support and those that are not entitled to support would also not be entitled to work (Home Office, 2014c, Doyle, 2014). Furthermore, should someone's case be declined, or other circumstances change, they could find their support removed and themselves made destitute. These government practices have been described as a "deliberate policy of destitution" (Darling, 2009; 649), and produce a precarious landscape of support for those seeking asylum. I shall now turn to look in more detail at what this government support entails.

2.4.2 Financial Support

According to a House of Commons report:

The asylum support system was originally modelled on the Income Support structure, which provides for different benefit rates depending on the applicant's age. However, over the years the link with Income Support has gradually broken.

(Gower, 2015; 7)

This means there is a disparity between what people seeking asylum can claim and what 'citizens' can access. For instance, Jobseeker's Allowance for a single adult over 25 years old was approximately £70 a week during my study period (UK Government, 2016) while a single adult seeking asylum, on Section 95 support, would only be able to access approximately £36 a week (Home Office, 2016b). While this is not a like-for-like comparison it does highlight the clear difference in levels between these two forms of benefits. Taking all costs and benefits into account, asylum support is still considerably less than that for unemployed UK citizens. There is also a difference in the amount and type of financial support people can access depending on whether someone is claiming under Section 95 or Section 4.

Table 1 highlights the amount of money individuals and families on Section 95 support received during my study. The amount depended on the ages, and numbers of people, in the household.

Table 1: Section 95 Support

	Single adult	Couple	Parent and one Child	Parent and two Children	Couple and one child	Couple and two children
Payment time study (February 2014 – April 2015)	£36.95	£72.52	£96.90	£149.86	£125.48	£178.44
Payment since August 2015	£36.95	£73.90	£73.90	£110.85	£110.85	£147.80

It also illustrates the reduction in some payments in 2015 (Bentley, 2015). In 2015 the government standardised support at £36.95 for each adult and child claiming under

Section 95. This resulted in considerable reduction in support for households with children. The government argued that the previous level resulted in “families receiving significantly more cash than is necessary to meet their essential living needs” and that the new decreased payment levels would still meet people’s “essential needs” and “particular needs” (Bentley, 2015; 2). However, as I will show in this thesis, many people were already struggling to meet basic needs before August 2015, and this reduction in support is likely to increase many of the challenges I discuss (particularly in Chapter 7). Furthermore, almost all asylum support, unlike other benefits, does not increase with inflation and therefore people have, and will, experience a real-time decrease in the amount of money they can access (Gower, 2015).

For families with children under four (both before and after August 2015) those on Section 95 support could, and can, apply for a small additional payment. This was £5 a week for the first year of a child’s life, falling to £3 a week when the child reached one and stopping completely on the child’s fourth birthday (Home Office, 2016b). Pregnant mothers could, and can, also apply to access an additional £3 a week and a one-off £300 maternity payment (Home Office, 2016b). However, with growing children, the need for maternity clothes and a healthy diet during pregnancy and with some surveys putting the average cost of a baby in their first year at over £11,000 (LV, 2016), this ‘top-up’ does not go far and is likely to leave people struggling to meet their basic needs (Chapter 7, also see Allsopp et al., 2014, City of Sanctuary, 2015).

For those on Section 4, the situation is even worse. The government had already, before 2015, been paying a flat-rate cash payment which was, and still is, slightly lower at £35.39 per person per week (Bentley, 2015). As above, this could be ‘topped up’ with maternity payments and payments for young children; however, the amount could be reduced to even less than for those on Section 95 support. Furthermore, this is not normally paid in cash; instead it is provided on a prepaid card – called an Azure payment card – that can only be used in specific shops, and cannot be used to buy some goods (see Chapter 7, Carnet and Blanchard, 2014).

All claimants on Section 4 or Section 95 support can also receive free NHS prescriptions, eye tests and dental care and children can access free school meals² (Home Office, 2016b).

Through Section 69 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, anyone who may need to report to a Home Office reporting centre who lives over 3 miles away may also claim their travel expenses (Home Office, 2015b, also see Chapter 5). Beyond this, for refused asylum applicants or those who do not pass the destitution test, there is no other right to financial support.

In Chapter 7 I will explore how people live, and cope with, these limited funds and this precarious financial situation. Closely linked to the financial situation and also dependent on someone's legal status is their access to housing, and so it is to this I now turn (also see Chapter 6).

2.4.3 Accommodation Support

National Asylum Support Service (NASS) is the section of the Home Office responsible for accommodation and support of people who are seeking asylum. NASS then contracts out the maintenance and provision of housing, with most contracts since 2012 going to private companies (NAO, 2014, Asylum Aid, 2015, Darling, 2016). Similarly to financial support, people can access this accommodation if they meet the criteria for Section 5 or 95 support. In addition accommodation is provided if a person is under the age of 18 and would be made homeless without it (Shelter, 2013, Home Office, 2013b).

The type of accommodation can vary depending on availability, the make-up of the household and the part of the asylum process someone is in. "This could be in a flat, house, hostel or bed and breakfast" (Home Office, 2016b). Regardless of the type of accommodation, people are not allowed to choose where they live and will often find themselves moved to different parts of the UK from where they claimed asylum (Hynes, 2011). It is also unlikely, even if someone has previously lived in London or the South East of England, that they will be allowed to stay in the area (Home Office, 2015f). This policy has been referred to as a 'policy of compulsory dispersal' (Hynes, 2011); if people want

² The policy to allow any children to access free school meals is being reviewed following the 2015 spending review. This could be scrapped within the next 5 years (BLAIR, O. 2015. Free school meals for infants 'set to be scrapped' under Osborne's spending review. *Independent*, 20 September 2015.)

to access housing and not find themselves homeless, then they have no choice but to accept that they will be dispersed across the UK.

After putting in an application for asylum, people are normally moved to 'pre-dispersal accommodation' for a few days to a few weeks. While this is described as 'pre-dispersal' the reality is people are often relocated at this point. This can often result in people moving multiple times as, the 'pre-dispersal accommodation' will not necessarily be in the same city that their post-dispersal accommodation will be in (Asylum Aid, 2015). Pre-dispersal accommodation is normally a mixed-gender hostel although families are sometimes placed in flats or houses (Asylum Aid, 2015). If successful at the screening interview, and if someone is granted Section 95 support, they are then moved again, normally within the same region, to post dispersal accommodation. Government contracts with private providers' states that families should be housed in single unit accommodation (NAO, 2014); however, in practice this is not always the case (Asylum Aid, 2015). Other people are normally accommodated in shared, single gender, flats or houses (Asylum Aid, 2015).

If someone is placed on Section 4 support, they can often find themselves in accommodation that is less desirable. This can mean if moved from Section 95 support to Section 4 support someone can also find themselves being physically made to move. This tends to be within the same area but the accommodation could vary in type. Section 4 housing can be a single family house if it is a family unit applying; however, it is more often shared accommodation, with people sharing a house, staying in a hostel or bed and breakfast (Asylum Aid, 2015). People on Section 4 are also occasionally accommodated in full board accommodation. When this is the case, they will not be given a payment card and instead will be provided with food and essential toiletries, to quote the guidelines, "They may also supply nappies, etc and essential sanitary items for female supported persons" (Home Office, 2015b; 8).

It is clear, then, that like access to finance, access to housing is also precarious. As Darling (2011a) notes, "the rationalities of governance that accompany accommodation create an account of housing which is deliberately decoupled from feelings of security"; it is a space where feelings of belonging can be undermined and challenged. Access to housing is dependent on someone's legal status - someone does not only risk being made destitute at any time should their legal status change, they also can find themselves relocated depending on what is happening with their asylum case. Furthermore, the type

of accommodation someone can access depends both on their current legal position and their family structure, particularly whether they have children with them in the UK or not. Gill (2009b; unpagged) highlights that “an association between stillness and safety is clearly evident” in the asylum context. In Chapter 6 I will look further at this precarious housing situation, considering in more depth both the effects of being moved as well as people’s wider experiences of accommodation during the asylum process.

2.4.2 Some Notes on Women Accessing Support During the Asylum Process

As many women are here as dependents, it is important to understand that their ability to stay in the UK is based on the acceptance of the main (normally male) applicant. In other words, they will only be allowed to stay in the UK if their partner, or other family member, who is claiming asylum is successful. Freedman (2008b) has criticised asylum practice as women who are here with family members may have their own case for asylum but are not always offered the opportunity to fully explore this. While the UK government has taken some steps to address this, such as offering childcare during interviews, it is nonetheless the case that the majority of dependents over 18 are women, some of whom will have a case for asylum that is never explored (Home Office, 2010b). This means that women’s ability to stay in the UK, and also access to financial support and housing while in the UK, will be dependent on a family member, normally a partner’s, asylum claim.

It has been acknowledged that this can make people vulnerable to domestic abuse or exploitation. To try and mitigate this, women (or anyone who suffers domestic abuse) who are here as dependents may also be able to claim leave to remain on humanitarian grounds if they are forced to leave their relationship with the applicant due to abuse (Home Office, 2013a).

Furthermore, to quote the Home Office guidelines, if “your relationship with a British citizen or someone settled in the UK has broken down because of domestic violence, you may be able to apply for indefinite leave to remain” (Home Office, 2013a) and occasionally emergency cash support can be given (Home Office, 2015a). However, this is not necessarily easy, or well-known (ASAP, 2014) and as I will show in Chapter 6, can result in people finding themselves destitute, or tolerating abuse for longer than they otherwise would.

This linking of access to support, relationship status and legal status creates a 'socio-legal' category that is not only about access to support, but also about family and other relationships. It creates a precarious landscape of support, where people worry about becoming destitute and can potentially result in people tolerating abuse (ASAP, 2014).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has mapped out the precarious landscape of the UK asylum system. It has provided an overview of what asylum is, who claims asylum and what support someone may, or may not, be able to access. Importantly it has shown that, the status of 'asylum seeker' is one of "pending recognition" (Tyler, 2015; unpagged), the asylum process is complex and, when someone is seeking asylum the conditions of their life can be changed at any time. The precariousness of this situation is compounded because the status of 'asylum seeker' is not simply a 'legal' category but a 'socio-legal' category as people's access to government support is so tightly intertwined with their legal status (Dwyer and Brown 2008; 203). Access to finance and accommodation can change and someone seeking asylum can be made destitute, detained or deported at any time.

This chapter has also extended Dwyer and Brown's (2008) work on a 'socio-legal' category by laying out some of the ways family relationships can have an impact on how and what support people can access. I have illustrated that the number of family members, as well as their age, can affect what support, if any, is available. This can particularly be seen in terms of Section 4, which along with its associated access to housing and finance is more likely to be granted to someone if they have a child. However, it can also be seen in the way family constructions affect the type of accommodation some may be placed in or exactly what finance someone may be able to access. This is further highlighted in the way the category 'dependent' can cause someone to become literally 'dependent' on a partner to meet their basic needs, and potentially open up a space for abuse to occur.

I have focused here on government provision, as it is the government that constructs these socio-legal categories and it is the government (through legislation and policy) that creates this precarious landscape of support. However, under these circumstances people sometimes also turn to a range of charitable organisations and informal networks of friends and friendly strangers. I will explore this non-governmental support further in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, showing how it can be a lifeline to people made destitute by the

state, but how it can also be precarious and difficult to receive. In the next chapter I will continue to lay the groundwork for the empirical chapters by providing a theoretical framework that looks at temporality, power and the idea of precarity that I have begun to use here.

Chapter 3: A Theoretical Framework: Time, Power and Precarious Lives

This chapter draws together three areas of literature to provide the theoretical framework for this thesis. The first section provides a way of understanding *Time and Temporality*, looking at how we can define time and how time may be experienced. The second section extends this to consider *Power, Temporal Power and Waiting*, opening up the space to explore both the governmental effects of waiting (Chapter 5) and the limits of this temporal power (Chapter 8). The third section, *Precarious Conditions*, examines the literature on precarity, developing a framework for exploring life under the resulting conditions (Chapters 6 and 7). Together, these allow the research to explore the ways waiting is maintained, experienced and lived in the lives of people seeking asylum in the UK.

The three theoretical sections inevitably intertwine with the analysis chapters, also often drawing from multiple parts of this theoretical framework, and regularly returning to ideas of waiting, temporal power and temporal uncertainty. While each section draws on different bodies of literature, they also build on each other, with ideas of temporality, power, waiting and daily life running throughout. This theoretical approach allows a more textured understanding of the conditions of life for people who are seeking asylum in the UK. It allows the research to consider what it is to be made to wait, life under the resulting conditions and how seemingly ordinary acts of 'doing waiting' may be read as oppositional practice.

3.1 Time and Temporality

The Oxford English dictionary provides us with thirty-three definitions for time, with definitions varying from "the rhythmic pattern of a piece of music" to "a portion of time in history", "the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future regarded as a whole" to "time as measured in hours and minutes", "the conditions of life during a particular period" to "one's lifetime" (OED, 2016;

unpaged). Time is context-dependent; it has no single definition, with our understanding depending on the situation and way the word is used linguistically. Temporality is defined in relation to time as “The state of existing within or having some relationship with time” (Oxford, 2016; unpagged). So, temporality is the relationship of a person, place or object to time and our understanding of time is not fixed.

Bourdieu, in *Pascalian Meditations* (2000), provides a useful framework in this research for understanding time and temporality. He explains that the way ‘time’ is used in ordinary language has resulted in time either being seen as “a pregiven reality, a thing in-itself, previous and external to practice, or as the (empty) *a priori* framework for every historical process” (Bourdieu 2000; 206). Everyday language reinforces the idea of time-as-thing, something that one has, that one gains or wastes, lacks or has on one's hands - something we are not a part of but rather “have a relation of externality, that of a subject facing an object” (Bourdieu 2000; 206). However, he goes on to argue, we can break with the point of view that time is external to us “by reconstructing the point of view ... of practice as 'temporalization', thereby revealing practice is not *in* time but *makes* time (human time, as opposed to biological or astronomical time)” (ibid).

Time (and the passing of time) is not a neutral dimension but is constituted by social practices, as it is about how we physically experience a sequence of events as we live through them. So while astronomical time, such as the seasons changing or day moving to night, will occur no matter what, or while living things will age, what makes ‘time’ in a human sense is our experience of it: Through “hope or despair, exceptions or impatience, and all the other states of mind through which we experience time” (Bourdieu, 2000; 214).

For geographers, this brings to the fore the idea that time and space are intricately linked and so need to not be seen as a dichotomy but as “inextricably interwoven” (Massey, 1992; 261). If time is constructed by social practice and experience, then its construction and our experience will vary spatially as experiences happen in space and social practice is not uniform across space. As May and Thrift (2001; 5) explain:

The picture that emerges is less of a singular or uniform social time stretching over a uniform space, than of varied (and uneven) networks of time stretching in different and divergent directions across an uneven social field [...] The impact and reach of developments in different domains varying across space so a further geography is described, as the already partial (and uneven) networks

that constitute one domain connect (or fail to connect) with the (partial and uneven) networks constituting another. The result is therefore a radical unevenness in the nature and quality of social time itself, with this spatial variation a constitutive part rather than an added dimension of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of social time or what, for precisely these reasons, we prefer to call TimeSpace [sic].

In the lives of international migrants, including people seeking asylum, this *timespace* link is particularly important, as at some point they will have moved from their country of origin to a new country. The way time is socially constructed and understood (and thus experienced) may vary across these spaces (May and Thrift, 2001). People may have to learn to navigate new spaces, ensuring that they are 'on time' to appointments and trying to fit their lives with the 'rhythms' of daily life (getting up and going to bed at 'appropriate times', knowing what time of day and time in their lives children attend school, what 'time' you can shop etc). Furthermore, many migrants (including many people seeking asylum) will still have connections with their country of origin whether through regular contact with people, or a desire to watch relevant news channels. This brings to the fore the unevenness of timespace. As people move countries, they engage with multiple spaces and navigate multiple constructions and understandings of time and the 'proper modes of behaviour' within particular timespaces.

Bourdieu (2000; 208), argues that "[t]ime (or at least what we call time) is really experienced only when the quasi-automatic coincidence between expectations and charges, *illusion* and *lusiones*, expectations and the world which is there to fulfil them, is broken". When a person migrates, the link is broken because in travelling across space and engaging with multiple spaces it highlights that 'human time' or time as we experience it is not something external that 'happens to us' but something socially constructed. Time (or at least our temporal experience of time) is made through experience, language, human interactions and social expectations. For instance, whether or not siestas are common, what time of day someone has their main meal (if indeed they have a main meal) or the timing of the school and work day all vary globally. When people move, daily routines become interrupted as things happen when people do not expect them *to*. Furthermore, as a result of this breaking of temporal expectations, time is also more likely to move faster or slower than someone may expect (Bourdieu, 2000); someone may suddenly find themselves rushing as the school run takes longer than

expected, or time dragging as they miss family and friends. In Chapter 5, I look at the differing ways time is experienced by people who are seeking asylum, drawing out its rhythms, ruptures and routines. However, as I will also show in Chapter 5, for people seeking asylum the 'breaking' of temporal expectations does not only relate to the rhythms and routines of daily life, as it does for most migrants, but also the life course.

3.1.1 Interrupting the Life Course

Just as the micro-rhythms and routines of daily life vary spatially, so do the temporal expectations of the life course. Katz and Monk (2013; 4) explore "the diversity in women's experiences across space, time, class and culture". They note that "defining life in terms of a set of 'stages', especially if these are linked to chronological ages, is fraught with difficulty, especially if adopting a comparative perspective", as particular events are not "experienced in universal ways" (Katz and Monk, 2013; 5). Nonetheless, the collection of essays highlights not only these geographical variations but some structural similarities in women's lives. In so doing, the essays draw attention to the difference between biological time and social time and help us to understand that while some moments in women's life may be shared (attending school, meeting a partner, the birth of a child, the first and last day of paid work or grieving a death), they can be experienced differently (or not experienced at all) by different people in different timespaces.

Research on transnational migration adds to this understanding, noting that contemporary life is often characterised by a whole range of movements that do not "take the form of permanent ruptures ... but are more likely to be transient and complex, ridden with disruptions, detours, and multiple destinations" (Yeoh et al., 2005; 1). While in reality people's movements are normally limited by citizenship status, social expectations or economics, people often do not stay in a single location for their whole life (Conway and Cohen, 1998, De Jong, 2000, Balaz et al., 2004, Mesnard, 2004), with many people now seeing some form of migration as part of the desired or expected life course (King, 2002). However, a person seeking asylum is, by definition, fleeing persecution. They may have had to leave their country of origin unexpectedly, or if they are claiming asylum after coming to the UK (or other country of application) they may no longer be able to return to the country of origin. The conditions of migration are dictated not by choice, but by force, and while the line between migrant and refugee is often blurred (Long, 2013), seeking asylum is not a part of most people's expected life course.

Bourdieu (2000; 216) explains that life “[e]xpectations tend to be universally roughly adapted to objective chances”. This is because most people have some power over their own lives and therefore the ability to realise their own future, while also adjusting “their desires to the capability to satisfy them” (Bourdieu, 2000; 216). So, people tend to have expectations of their lives that are in line with the chance of them achieving these expectations: The child of a UK university lecturer or doctor may well expect to go to University, or the son of a factory worker in India may realistically hope to obtain a factory job, or a girl in rural Pakistan may aspire to marry and have a healthy child. These expectations tend to vary depending on geographical location, our social positioning and economic wealth and form the basis of our expected life course. However, he goes on to note “it would be wrong to conclude that the circle of expectations and chances cannot be broken” and when it does this can cause a “mismatch, which generates tensions and frustrations” (Bourdieu, 2000; 234).

For those in the UK asylum system, this link between life expectations and chances of achieving them (at least while they are situated in the asylum system) is broken. As McDowell (2008; 500) explains, “for many migrants, although not all, movement across space is accompanied by downward social mobility, resulting in a precarious location on the fringes of the British working class”. Once someone claims asylum they are not only ‘located on the fringes’, but also outside the labour market altogether (see Chapter 2). They may well have had professional jobs, they may have held positions of power in politics, the military or other state institutions, they may be university-educated or could have owned land, property or business, with their life expectations reflecting this social status. However, on claiming asylum, people become subject to the rules and regulations of the asylum system. On claiming asylum, someone can no longer dictate the terms of their condition. Having no legal right to work not only strips someone of the ability to earn money, but also interrupts the life course affecting people’s identity, access to material goods and position in society. Furthermore, people have no choice in where they live and only limited choice over the conditions of their life, continually aware they could be made destitute, detained or deported at any time (see Chapters 5 and 6). This ‘betwixt and between’ state of being (Turner, 1995), places people as temporarily marginalised ‘outsiders’ (Hynes, 2011); with their expected life course on hold, this can be seen as a state of limbo, or perhaps more accurately ‘liminality’.

3.1.2 Liminality: Neither Here Nor There

'Liminality' is "a state experienced by people as they pass over the threshold of one phase of their life to another" (Hynes 2011; 2). Initially developed by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1995) it has been drawn upon to examine how refugees and people seeking asylum are caught between a "rite of separation" and "rite of incorporation" (Hynes 2011; 30). As Rapport and Overing (2013; 230) explain, the liminal stage is "complex and confused":

For, having crossed the threshold beyond one status or identity while not yet having crossed into another one, the initiate was neither here nor there; beyond normal, everyday social-cultural categories, beyond normal conceptions of routine identity, and also the conceptions of behaviour, rule, time and space that accompanied identity... [they] were often removed from everyday site, or else treated as if invisible. They were often spoken about as dead or dissolved into amorphous, unrecognisable matter... [and] were often treated as unclean and polluting to those still going about their everyday lives; also as potentially dangerous. Hence, initiates in the liminal stage were often responsible for certain ritual offices or experts who manage their lives in tools the rite of reincorporating them into social cultural space, time and identity was to be affected.

This concept has been used within the literature to explore the ways refugees occupy 'liminal' spaces within the refugee camps of the global 'South' (see for instance Kunz, 1973, Hitchcox, 1993, Malkki, 1995, Turton, 2005) and more recently how policy and practice within the global 'North' positions people seeking asylum on the edge, or even outside of, society (Hynes 2011). Hynes (2011) argues that the current legislative framework, policies and practice of the UK asylum system creates 'policy-imposed liminality'. She argues people seeking asylum's "position within the social structures are limited, yet the social system in which they remain does not change"; as such they are deliberately situated "'outside' mainstream society" and denied the ability to "restore normal routines" (Hynes, 2011; 31).

This policy-imposed liminality (Hynes, 2011), unlike liminality occurring under normal circumstances, deliberately prevents a person from moving forward through their expected life course. The status of 'asylum' is one of being in 'limbo', and the asylum system deliberately causes people seeking asylum to 'wait', creating and maintaining this status. In Chapter 5, I take this literature in a new direction by utilising Bourdieu's (2000)

understanding of temporality to consider the breaking of the link between expectations and chances.

3.2 Power, Temporal Power and Waiting

Foucault was interested in the link between power and knowledge and how this could be used as a form of social control; in other words, how this investment is created, sustained and maintained. He addresses 'power' by not only asking "who exerts power? How? On whom?" but also argues that this can only be resolved if "the other question "how does it happen?" is resolved at the same time" (Foucault, 1988; 103, in Ramazanoglu, 2003; 9). Foucault's understandings of power therefore provide a good basis for looking at how people become invested and maintained in the process of waiting in the asylum system. This section, then, first looks at Foucault's work before returning to Bourdieu's (2000) *Pascalian Meditations* to consider temporality as a form of power and what the limits of that power may be.

3.2.1 Micro-Strategies of Power: An Everyday Approach

In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978, 1980a) focuses on the micro-strategies of power. He sees power "not as possessed by an individual, class or group, nor... centralised in the law, economy or the state. Rather, he argues, it is immanent to everyday relationships" (Macleod and Durrheim, 2002; 43), as "exerted from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, 1978; 94, in Macleod and Durrheim, 2002; 44). In other words, it occurs between bodies, and while this is non-egalitarian, with some bodies (for instance 'men' or 'citizens') generally having a greater interest in maintaining the status quo, it can, at any moment, occur between any bodies and flow in any, or multiple directions (Bordo, 1993). This allows for an exploration into the power within, and between, embodied experiences.

As Macleod and Durrheim (2002; 44) explain, this provides "some of the theoretical tools needed to shift analysis of power from a structural definition to one in which power relations and the power/knowledge nexus becomes focal", one in which everyday interactions can be understood and helps "explain how the personal is political". This is particularly important when looking at everyday experiences of the asylum system. Firstly, it highlights that everyday ordinary interactions should not be overlooked in favour of the extraordinary. Secondly, it allows an understanding of how power manifests

in intersectional ways focusing analysis on the varying (and often complex) flows of power within an individual situation. Thirdly, it allows us to move away from preconceived assumptions about who possesses power, to consider how, and why, power exists within any moment. For instance, it allows us to view interactions between a Home Office case worker and person seeking asylum not as powerful/powerless, but instead as far more complex, with power occurring, in each moment, in a variety of different ways. Finally, as power is seen as immanent and occurring in any direction, this permits for an analysis which allows us to identify moments of resistance even when it occurs simultaneously with oppression. As such, in this project, throughout the research and analysis process, a focus on micro-strategies of power opened up the possibility of examining ordinary interactions and mundane events while also drawing out what Katz (2004; 242) calls “oppositional practices” (see Chapter 8).

3.2.2 Governmentality

In Foucault’s later work on governmentality (1991), he draws together micro- and macro-scales of power (Macleod and Durrheim, 2002). In so doing, he allows researchers to ask what we mean by ‘the UK asylum system’ and how this can be understood in relation to the micro power explained above. Foucault’s work on governmentality draws together micro-effects and macro-strategies of power without privileging either. He describes governmentality as ‘the conduct of conduct’,

a form of actively aiming to shape, guide or affect the conditions of some person or persons... Government as an activity could concern the relations between self and self. Private interpersonal relationships involving some form of control or guidance, relationships and social institutions and communities and, finally, relationships concerned with the exerting of political sovereignty.
(Gordon, 1991; 2-3)

Being particularly interested in the “art of government”, what that activity might consist of, and how it might be carried out (Gordon, 1991; 3), Foucault (1991) looked at, and drew together, multiple scales, arguing contemporary government is “exercised through an ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations and tactics” (Macleod and Durrheim, 2002; 44). As such, this frame provides a way of understanding and examining the asylum system; taking it not as a singular policy or process but, rather as a whole range of relationships, institutions, ideas, tactics and structures, that (directly and indirectly) govern the lives of people seeking asylum.

Furthermore, Foucault noted that we govern ourselves, that is we conduct ourselves in accordance with certain internalized norms, resulting in us often following, re-producing and, by extension, normalising the processes that govern us (Foucault, 1954). However, as he went on to observe, “[g]overnmentality pertains to governance as an art because people are free agents and can resist regulatory norms [...] people have the capacity to resist normalization” (Ettlinger, 2007; 333).

Given this, it is perhaps unsurprising that of all Foucault's work, his lectures on governmentality most influence the asylum literature (see for instance Gill, 2009c, 2016, Darling, 2011a, 2016). Despite this interest though, to date, there has been very little use of Foucault's ideas in exploring the experiences of women in the asylum system (for a notable exception see Conlon, 2010). Nonetheless, for those looking at the lived experiences of women, Foucault's ideas may be particularly insightful. As Macleod and Durrheim (2002; 44) explain, Foucault draws together the “multiplicity and the interconnection of micro- and macro-strategies of power” allowing us to see how complex systems may result in a particular situation such as the disciplining of ‘women’. In other words, it not only allows us to look at the multiple ways people are governed within the asylum system, but also the ways gendered (and raced) ideas may play into, and affect, the governmental processes that help enable this governing. This thesis, then, helps address this gap by drawing on women's accounts of the UK asylum system and highlighting some moments where gender directly affects experience. It also, in Chapters 5 and 8, helps to develop Foucault's approach to power more broadly, particularly governmentality, by giving it a temporal turn and looking at the governmental effects of waiting.

3.2.3 Temporal Power

Bourdieu (2000; 227-8) explains “It is often forgotten, because it is so self-evident, that temporal power is a power”. It is the ability to have control over and change someone's temporality, change their experience of time, their rhythms and routines of daily life or interrupt their life course. This temporal power, he argues, is felt in its most extreme form when someone or something has the ability to make themselves “unpredictable and deny other people any reasonable anticipation” to place other people in an uncertain position, with no (or limited) capacity to predict (Bourdieu, 2000; 228, also see Schwartz, 1975, Comfort, 2009).

He goes on to show that waiting is one of the key ways that this power can be exerted - making a person wait is to have power over a person. Someone becomes

[d]ispossessed of the power to give sense, in both senses, to his [sic] life, to state the meaning and direction of his existence, he [sic] is condemned to live in a time orientated by others, an alienated time. This is, very exactly, the fate of all the dominated who are obliged to wait for everything to come from others, from the holders of power over the game and over the objective and subjective prospect of gain that it can offer.

(Bourdieu, 2000; 237)

Waiting has become a common feature of modern day life (Lefebvre, 2002). We wait in line, we wait for exam results, we wait to hear news about a new job and we wait for a passport to arrive. The state often is involved in these processes of waiting. Furthermore, for those who rely on the state to survive, who need to wait for welfare support, a hospital appointment or, in the case of people seeking asylum, for leave to remain, the process of waiting becomes more significant. When the outcome of the waiting is something greatly desired, particularly when it is something that is needed to sustain life, people have little to no choice but to submit to the conditions of their waiting (Auyero, 2010). As such waiting implies, and involves, submission. People can, and will, modify their behaviour submitting to the waiting process. As Bourdieu (2000; 228) explains, “the whole duration of the experience - modifies the behaviour of the person who ‘hangs’, as we say, on the awaited decision”.

The more someone needs, or desires, the thing they are waiting for, the greater the temporal power the body that makes them wait can exert. If someone has no choice but to continue to wait, the body that exerts this power can affect someone’s temporality by ‘taking time’, holding the waiting person indefinitely. As Bourdieu (2000; 208) draws out, the body can adjourn, defer, delay, rise false hope, or, conversely, rush, take by surprise and in turn the person waiting has to submit to this constantly changing temporality - They are in a situation of “anxiety, powerlessness waiting”. In order to understand the effects of power, and the link between time and power Bourdieu (2000; 208), highlights the need to “catalogue and analyse” the processes and practices of this temporal power. This thesis helps address this as it works to catalogue and analyse the links between time

and power focusing on the practices of the asylum process, and the condition of waiting, and hoping, for leave to remain.

In Chapter 5, I use this understanding of temporal power, alongside Foucault's concept of governmentality, to extend theoretical understandings of being made to wait in the asylum process. Through taking a multi-scale approach, I show how waiting can be used as a tactic of governmentality, as the policies and practices within the asylum system exert direct and indirect control on the body of the person seeking asylum. Direct control can be exerted through causing the person seeking asylum to physically 'wait' in detention centres, government offices, undesirable housing and for bureaucratic processes. Indirect control can be exerted through the, often overlooked, daily psychological and physical effects which prolonged periods of 'limbo' and 'waiting' have on an individual (Porter and Haslam, 2005, Vitus, 2010, Hynes, 2011). Utilising this basic understanding, I extend the work in Chapters 6 and 7 to consider how people live out their life during this waiting period and, in Chapter 8, I look at how my participants engaged in activities that enabled them, in small ways, to resist the tactic of being made to wait.

3.2.4 The Art of Waiting

Bourdieu (2000) notes that temporal power can never be experienced in its absolute form, as a person can be durably 'held' (so that he can be made to wait, hope, etc.) only to the extent that he is invested in the process. In *Bourdieu's* (2000) exploration of 'waiting', he draws out the limits of temporal power and in so doing the opportunity for the person who is waiting to resist. He argues that temporal power is based on people's willingness to accept 'the rules of the game', *to wait and hope for the desired outcome but that* this circle between chances and expectations that keeps people hoping and waiting, can be broken. Drawing from Kafka's *The Trial* (in Unseld, 1982), *Bourdieu* illustrates this through the court case of K³. K "has been slandered. At first, he carries on as if nothing had happened; then he begins to worry, and he takes a lawyer. He enters into the game" and it is his investment in the game (in this instance the court case) that keeps him "waiting and anxious", compliant to the often unpredictable rules of the game (Bourdieu, 2000; 229-30). He explains how "K is in the grip of the apparatus of justice only insofar as he takes an interest in his trial, actually cares about it"; when he withdraws the

³ K is the pseudonym given for the defendant in the court case and the way Bourdieu (2000) refers to the case.

task of defending himself, he withdraws his investment in the game and also his dependence on the lawyer (other people and systems) through which his investment in the game was being maintained (Bourdieu, 2000; 238). On a macro-scale, this may be true. For “the belief that this or that future, either desired or feared, is possible, probable or inevitable can, in some historical conditions, mobilize a group around it and so help to favour or prevent the coming of that future” (Bourdieu, 2000; 235). This can be seen for instance in the varying factions and warring sides currently fighting in Syria or through the recent mobilisation and result of the European Union referendum in the UK.

However, if we are taking a Foucauldian approach to power, we must see power as multi-scalar. While there may be the possibility, as Bourdieu (2000; 236) infers, that when the conditions are right, brief social ruptures such as iconoclasm or acts of terrorism can result in larger social change, we all live within the social structures that retain and maintain the status quo. Power is not top-down; the macro and micro are connected and the line between them is blurred. Acts, for instance of terrorism, do not only happen on the macro- scale but through a whole range of social processes that result in an individual, society and institutions all (re)acting in particular ways. As a society we accept, and indeed expect, a person committing terrorism to be imprisoned. Kafka’s ‘K’ may have been able to choose to disengage with the court case but if the court case had been one where they were being charged with a criminal offence they would not have been able to simply cease engagement, as this would have resulted in them being physically detained. Power may not be top-down, but society believes in, and continuously reproduces, the game. Our actions and expectations retain and maintain the status quo (Foucault, 1978, Macleod and Durrheim, 2002). This affects our bodily freedoms but also access to money, housing and other essentials to survive. People cannot simply stop engaging with the game when they must engage with it to meet their basic needs.

As people who are seeking asylum are highly invested in the outcome of their waiting, there are two reasons that it is even harder, or impossible, for them to simply disengage with the asylum system. Firstly, for a person seeking asylum, the stakes are high and can be a matter of life or death. If they lose their asylum case they could face destitution, detention and/or deportation but if they win they gain leave to remain in the UK with all the associated legal rights. The “aspiration to be integrated”, to gain leave to remain, keeps people invested in the game, as they hope that if they wait and submit to the conditions of their waiting for long enough they will win (Bourdieu, 2000; 236). Secondly,

if someone disengages with the asylum system, the social structures and laws around residency, welfare, work and accommodation will not change; the person is likely to face hardship as they will not have legal recognition, and therefore, in turn, will be denied the basic rights of work, welfare and residency (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, if found by the authorities they would almost certainly face being physically detained and potentially deported for having disengaged with the system; it is highly unlikely they would then win their asylum case, and with it the right to stay in the UK. As Bourdieu (2000; 238) observes, “there is no question of suggesting that one can escape from the games in which symbolic life and death are at stake”. For a person seeking asylum, the choice to disengage from the ‘game’ is one where their bodily freedoms, wellbeing and potentially life is at risk as they are subject to immigration regimes and could be forcibly detained or/and deported. For people seeking asylum, disengaging in the game is almost impossible and will normally only occur if they have lost all hope (see Chapter 5).

However, that is not to say that within the social and legal structures that exist, government is all-powerful and the person seeking asylum is powerless. As we noted above, governmentality is an art precisely because people are free agents and they have the capacity to resist the normalization of these processes and tactics (Ettlinger, 2007; 333). The government may have increasingly complex immigration controls and be able to detain or deport someone should they go (or are believed to be likely to go) underground. However, people seeking asylum do still choose to disengage with the system. Furthermore, even when someone is continuing to comply with the asylum process, the government cannot completely dictate the conditions of their waiting. Indeed, precisely by continuing to comply with the system, people ensure some level of support and there are rules and regulations the government is supposed to comply with. Additionally, while someone waits they can, within certain restrictions, choose what they do with their time.

Jeffrey’s (2010) notion of ‘timepass’ is useful in understanding how people in the asylum system live out, and utilise, this period of waiting. His study examined the experiences and strategies of unemployed young men in north India. He found, far from passively waiting, the men sometimes engaged in political action and also partook in activities that would help them develop cultural capital (Jeffrey, 2010, also see Bourdieu, 2005). He argues that ‘timepass’ can thus be far from passive; the period of ‘waiting’ opens up possibilities even as it creates frustration (Jeffrey, 2011, 2010). This then presents the

possibility to explore this time of waiting not only as a process of being made to wait (Chapter 5) but also as an active process (Chapter 8).

If this thesis is to 'catalogue, and analyse' waiting in the UK asylum system it needs not only to look at the temporal power of waiting, but also the way that power plays out in people's everyday lives and what life is like under the resulting conditions. Unlike the concept of governmentality, which is concerned with identifying and mapping processes that aim "to shape, guide or effect the conditions of some person or persons" (Gordon, 1991; 2-3), precarity is also concerned with an exploration of people's life under the resulting conditions. It is therefore to this concept of precarity that I now turn.

3.3 Precarious Conditions

The concept of precarity is useful in exploring the everyday ways people live out their life during this time of waiting. When people engage with the asylum process they submit to waiting; their lives become filled with temporal uncertainty as they are offered "no scope to the capacity to predict" (Bourdieu, 2000; 228). Someone does not know if or when they will gain legal recognition, whether or not they will suddenly be detained or deported, their life becomes one not only filled with, but also lived out in, uncertainty. They are situated in a precarious temporality and live their lives in precarious conditions. As Waite explains, precarity "conjures life worlds that are inflected with uncertainty and instability" (Waite, 2009; 416).

Bourdieu (1965; 361) is credited with being the first scholar to use the French term *précarité*, in his 1965 work *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. Here, he used it to describe casual workers' conditions in Algeria; however, in 1970s France "mass unemployment, or even widespread irregular labour, was unknown so the term was not initially linked to employment", instead becoming associated with poverty (Waite, 2009; 22-3, Pitrou, 1978). At "its most elemental level, precarity can be understood as literally referring to those who experience precariousness" (Waite, 2009; 416); however, some link it specifically to neoliberal market conditions (Bourdieu, 1999c, Dörre et al., 2006, Waite, 2009, Standing, 2016), while others see it as a broader condition of life (Butler, 2006, 2009, 2016, Ettliger, 2007, Raven-Ellison, 2015). When considering the lived experiences of women in the UK asylum system, both these academic approaches can help develop understanding. In this thesis, I draw from both traditions to show how people experience

both these forms of precarity. I argue this dual approach to precarity provides a framework that allows for a wider-reaching in-depth study of precariousness that can explore both the everyday, often practical, challenges whilst simultaneously acknowledging the feelings, emotions and sense of ontological insecurity, of living in precarious conditions, of living in a precarious temporality (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6, I utilise this dual approach to precarity to provide a detailed analysis of accommodation while, in Chapter 7, through looking at finance, I extend this understanding to examine the interrelationships, the co-contingencies and tensions between, these two precarities. In Chapter 8, I draw on this framework, to help show how people 'do waiting' and reduce the precarities of their lives. Finally, in Chapter 9 I show how the idea of dual precarity helps develop academic understandings of the condition(s) of precarious lives. To enable this, in this section, I outline some key elements of these approaches and how they can be utilised together to help develop a theoretical framework for understanding the lived realities of the women in this study, before showing how people in the asylum system are not only in a precarious situation but experience hyper-precarity.

3.3.1 Precarity of The Human Condition

On the one hand, some feel that an examination of modern life, in the West at least, finds "that there is something deeper about precarity than its articulation to labour alone would suggest – some more fundamental, but never foundational, human vulnerability, that neither the act nor potential of labour can exhaust" (Neilson and Rossiter, 2006; 11). For some, this comes in part from widespread fear and uncertainty that exists in the contemporary world (Furedi, 2005, Neilson and Rossiter, 2006). Most notably, Butler (2006, 2016) examines precariousness in the 21st-century, focusing on USA after the 2001 September 11th attack in New York (2006) and Western-waged modern wars (Butler, 2006, 2009). While she nods to the importance of things such as shelter, work, food, medical care, and legal status, noting "life requires various social and economic conditions to be met in order to be sustained as a life", her focus is far more on what it is to be a life, and on the conditions of life (Butler, 2009; 13-14). She argues human existence has a fragility and powerlessness in the face of ever-more-present everyday governmentality. In so doing, she distinguishes between 'precariousness', which for her is corporeal vulnerability shared by all, and 'precarity', which is a particular vulnerability imposed on the disenfranchised, poor and those endangered by natural disaster or war

(Watson, 2012). Furthermore, she “suggests that generalised precariousness breeds the conditions from which precarity is born for those perceived as a threat legitimise the measures taken to cause and/or maintain people in a state of precarity” (Raven-Ellison, 2015; 21).

Ettlinger (2007) gives this work a particular geographical turn. Drawing on Foucault’s (1991) concept of governmentality, she imagines how complex relationships to resistance can create “cooperative politics operating within and across scales” (Ettlinger, 2007; 321). She expands the concept of precarity, arguing it is not only a contemporary or modern phenomenon but instead “is located in the microspaces of everyday life and is an enduring feature of the human condition. It is not limited to a specific context in which precarity is imposed by global events or macrostructures” (Ettlinger, 2007; 320). Precarity as Ettlinger uses it offers useful possibilities in understanding the interplay of scale and geography and particularly how governmental processes can produce conditions of uncertainty that render life precarious. She draws out the untidiness of life and usefully explores how “[t]he surfacing of a particular logic or intersection of logics at any one moment depends upon the nature of linkage between the immediate context, an individual’s experiences from different contexts over time, as well as on how each actor’s kaleidoscope of thoughts and feelings intersects with those of other actors engaged in [an] interaction” (Ettlinger, 2007; 325). However, in saying everyone experiences precariousness, she offers little scope to explore the specific experiences of those that Butler (2006, 2009, 2016) described as experiencing precarity, those on the edge of society.

Raven-Ellison (2015) has taken this approach to precarity forward in her work to examine the experiences of women who have been detained. Her work is inherently geographical and scalar, as it focuses on the long-term implications of detention with particular reference to well-being, home and homemaking. Drawing from Butler (2006, 2016), she argues that women in this situation experienced both precariousness and precarity, for while precariousness is an inevitable part of life “this remains differentially experience[d]” and for the women in her study, “had an unacceptable impact on their everyday lives, with far-reaching consequences for their identity, belonging and well-being” (Raven-Ellison, 2015; 285). She suggests that “the impact of precarity for participants’ well-being can be understood in part through a framing of ontological security which foregrounds the concept of home. This remains vital to understanding the

co-contingencies of home, precarity and well-being and the significance of emotions” (Raven-Ellison, 2015; 270). However, while her work aims to look at everyday precarity and includes useful insights on people’s living situations and their relationship to their ‘homespace’, it does not go into depth on the more tactile, material and physical elements of these homespaces. This is perhaps because while this approach to precarity offers thoughtful insights into the condition, emotion and sense of precariousness, it does not offer much scope to explore more material, often mundane and practical elements of living in, and being in, a precarious situation.

3.3.2 Lived Precarity

Academic work that links precarity specifically to neoliberal market conditions has developed from the observation that there has been a move towards less secure labour conditions such as “casual, short-term, freelance and undocumented employment, that leave more people subject to *flexploitation*” (Waite, 2009; 416, Neilson and Rossiter, 2006, Molé, 2010, Ahlstrand, 2014). There are a range of workers that could fall under the label ‘precarious’ and, as Waite (2009; 417) points out, it can conflate workers “at opposite ends of the labour market spectrum”. Nonetheless, in this context, precarity refers to labour conditions that are fraught with uncertainty and instability.

One central aspect of precarious work is its temporal uncertainty and lack of permanence. Neilson and Rossiter (2006; 25) open with the observation that “the central problem of temporary labour is one of time”; people reported their days merging without them noticing, they “lose track of time” and “lose hope with what tomorrow’s going to be”. The lack of certainty about what hours someone will be employed for, and for how long, interrupts the assumption most adults will have a ‘working life’, starting at the end of education and ending at retirement (normally working full-time, Monday to Friday, 9 to 5). Furthermore, in Schneider’s (2002) documentary, it was the desire to ‘reclaim the time of life’ that concerned the workers, more than a \$2 an hour pay raise or safer working conditions (Schneider, 2002; unpagged, in Neilson and Rossiter, 2006). With a few exceptions (see for instance Hyman et al., 2003, Lopes and Dewan, 2014, Drache et al., 2015), this link between precarity and temporal uncertainty has not been drawn out. However, some scholars observe that under neoliberal conditions, there is an increased focus on the present rather than the future (Allison, 2013, Hardin, 2014) which perhaps comes from the need to survive the immediate situation, the focus on material needs now, and an inability to plan for the future. My analysis helps address this gap by

considering this link between precarity and temporal uncertainty beyond the labour context, looking at how it plays out, and affects, the everyday lives of people seeking asylum. In Chapter 5, I show that people find themselves situated in a precarious temporality before, in the remainder of the analysis chapters, looking at life under the resulting condition(s).

Another central aspect of precarity, particularly in the context of workers, has been its potential as a rallying point linking shared experiences and developing shared consciousness (Waite, 2009, Doerr, 2010, Dean, 2012). Notwithstanding precarity's potential as a rallying point for resistance, the act of shared consciousness-raising also means that discussions around precarious conditions become embedded in the things that matter to people on a day-to-day basis. Essentials of food (Batsleer, 2016), support networks (Olagnero et al., 2005, Mattoni and Doerr, 2007) and housing (Vidal et al., 2000, Kalyan, 2013, Ferreri et al., 2017) are brought into sharp focus. This is because the uncertainty and insecurity of working conditions is intimately related to housing and other living conditions (Ferreri et al., 2017). As such precarity can refer to:

*all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation
[...] But its reference also extends beyond the world of work to
encompass other aspects of intersubjective life, including housing,
debt, and the ability to build affective social relations.
(Neilson and Rossiter, 2006; unpagged)*

In Kalyan (2013; 8) she gives this focus on the everyday a temporal turn, through exploring the lasting effects of slum demolition and resettlement in Delhi. She observes how the state of non-permanence extends beyond the actual relocation, affecting people's sense of security, living conditions and ability to work and creating what she terms a sphere of "precarious urban temporality". Impermanency resulted in people having an unwillingness to invest in their home environments (Vidal et al., 2000) and affected the way they related to the immediate community and the wider city (Vidal et al., 2000, Kalyan, 2013). While, Kalyan (2013) does not explicitly state the academic approach to precarity that she is using in her work, her study shows that when people do not have permanent housing and are in a financially precarious position it can cause them to experience both a sense of ontological precariousness (Butler 2006, 2016) and the practical challenges of "precarious living and labour conditions" (Waite, 2009; 417). This highlights the importance of developing a dual approach to precarity, as I do in this thesis

(see particularly Chapters 6, 7 and 9), in order to better articulate and understand the experience of living in a precarious temporality.

Given that people seeking asylum are not legally allowed to work, it may initially seem odd to draw on literature that was originally developed to describe labour conditions when examining the lives of people in the asylum system. However, as I have shown, at its core much of this work is about the conditions people find themselves in when they cannot guarantee access to the money needed to survive and to ensure a stable life. For those seeking asylum the only legal ways to access the money for life's essentials (food, toiletries, clothes) is through charity or the state, and even this is in no way guaranteed, as a slight change in circumstances could result in someone being denied access to funds (see Chapter 2). In addition, the housing situation for people seeking asylum is one of instability and temporal uncertainty when relocation is common practice and destitution occurs regularly (Hynes, 2011). While those seeking asylum may not be allowed to work, I will show that, in part at least, due to their precarious temporality (Chapter 5), their housing (Chapter 6) and financial (Chapter 7) situations are fraught with uncertainty and instability; their lives are filled with, and lived out in, precarity. Furthermore, as the dual approach in this thesis draws out, the practical challenges of living in a precarious situation are coupled with a deeper ontological precarity. However, as Waite (2009) highlights, studies of precarity need to avoid homogenising or simplifying experiences as precarity is produced, and lived, very differently in different contexts. In the next section, I will further consider the particular situation people who are seeking asylum find themselves in and how that places them in not only a precarious but a hyper-precarious position.

3.3.3 Hyper-Precarious Lives

In Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson and Waite's project on experiences of forced labour among refugees and people seeking asylum in England, they develop the term hyper-precarious to describe the condition of some migrant workers (Waite et al., 2013, Lewis et al., 2015a, Lewis et al., 2015b). They argue "that the viscerally lived unfreedoms within some migrants' working lives brought about by a layering of insecurities produced by labour and immigration regimes is better conceptualized as hyper-precarious rather than 'merely' precarious" (Lewis et al., 2015a; 593). This is because the migration process both prior to arrival and once in the UK can leave people, particularly those who do not have a work visa (or the right to work in the UK), susceptible to exploitative conditions. Prior

to arrival, people may have experienced exploitation, networks of trafficking and debt, impoverishment, natural disaster, war or other forms of persecution, all of which will continue to affect people's lives in the UK (Zetter, 2009, Hynes, 2010). While once in the UK, as Lewis et al. (2015b; 589) summarises, "these factors may then be compounded [...] by compromised socio-legal status, lack of knowledge of rights, lack of access to information, isolation from society, multiple dependence on the employer, loss of or changes in employment, and debt accrued immigration – contributing to movement along a continuum of unfreedom towards forced labour" (also see Dwyer et al., 2011).

While I agree with Lewis et al. (2015a) that a combination of migratory factors along with precarious labour conditions can result in some refugees and people seeking asylum finding themselves in hyper-precarious conditions, I would extend this to argue that all those who engage in the asylum system (whether or not they work) are in a hyper-precarious position, and thus experience hyper-precarious lives. Firstly, many of the migratory factors described above (such as engagement with traffickers and/or smugglers) are experienced by many of those who seek asylum regardless of whether they work. Secondly, all those who claim asylum also have to negotiate "the immigration and asylum system, the overarching environment of deterrence of new arrivals into the UK, accessing services, [and] mistrust and disbelief of accounts provided" (Hynes, 2010; 966). Thirdly, in the UK, someone's basic rights to residence, work and welfare is dependent on their socio-legal status (Dwyer and Brown, 2008). For citizens, this status is relatively fixed, as they have the right to work and reside in the UK and there is a welfare system that is in place to support them if they find themselves out of work: a citizen retains the right to remain in the UK and while the welfare system may be fraught with challenges (see for instance Ashton et al., 2014, 2015, Slater, 2014, Loopstra et al., 2015), in theory at least, they should not find themselves destitute, detained without due cause or deported. However, migration policy means these rights are not extended to those seeking asylum and people can be made destitute, detained or deported from the UK. Finally, by definition, for someone to be claiming asylum they must have 'a well-founded fear of being persecuted' (UNHCR, 1979).

As Waite et al. (2013; 26) explain, "'hyper-precarity' [is] distinguished by the fear of return to persecution". As I have shown, this fear of persecution is a very real threat for those engaging in the asylum system (whether or not they work). People who are seeking asylum find themselves practically and emotionally situated in unstable and uncertain

conditions; they are not 'only' in a precarious position but a 'hyper-precarious' one, with their very existence at stake. I would therefore argue that those who engage in the asylum system are always in, and always experience, hyper-precariousness. However, it is important to note in my analysis, I specifically use this term to draw out moments where this condition is produced or experienced in particular ways due to a person's position in relation to immigration regimes.

While people may be in a hyper-precarious situation, experience of this in my research is likely to differ from in Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson and Waite's project. As Lewis et al. (2015b) highlight, when migrants engage in undocumented work they aim to remain under the state's radar, sometimes engaging in exploitative labour to survive. Conversely, as this project shows, people seeking asylum continuously engage with the state. Therefore, this research helps extend our understanding of hyper-precarity through exploring how it is experienced by those engaging in the asylum system. As Waite (2009; 412) notes, precarity is "double-edged, as it implies both a condition and a possible rallying point for resistance". It therefore seems important to not only examine what causes people to become situated, and maintained, in this hyper-precarious position (Chapter 5) and what life is like under the resulting conditions (Chapters 6 and 7) but, also whether, and how, people may be able to open up possibilities for consciousness-building and even resistance (Chapter 8).

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter drew together literature on time and temporality, power and precarity. Each section, while distinct, intertwining with ideas of temporal power, waiting and daily life drawn out throughout. As such, it not only provides the theoretical basis for each empirical chapter but also helps build the overall narrative of this thesis. In the first section I looked at Bourdieu's (2000) understanding of time and temporality in *Pascalian Meditations*. I considered how the rhythms and routines of people's lives are interrupted due to the asylum process, arguing that people seeking asylum occupy a 'liminal' space and that they are deliberately made to wait. In the second section, I went on to consider Foucault's understandings of power, particularly his ideas around micro-strategies of power (1978, 1980a) and governmentality (1991), alongside Bourdieu's (2000) understanding of time. This opens up the possibility for an analysis of the temporal power of waiting in this thesis (see particularly Chapters 5 and 8) and highlights the importance

of examining waiting in people's everyday lives. However, if we are to "catalogue and analyse all the behaviours associated with the exertion of power over other people's time", and the links between time and power, as Bourdieu (2000; 228) calls us to do, if this thesis is to fully examine waiting in people's everyday lives, then a framework that allows for an exploration of life under the resulting conditions was needed.

In the third section, I turned to the literature on precarity to provide such a framework. This literature is not only interested in what places people in a precarious (uncertain and unstable) position but also what life is like under these conditions. It is interested in both the production of and, the experience of, lives of precarity. I firstly highlighted that due to the temporal uncertainty and instability of the asylum system, people are situated in a precarious temporality, before going on to look at how we can understand the conditions of life in this waiting period. In reviewing the literature, I showed, when exploring the experiences of people seeking asylum, it is useful to draw both from traditions that look at precarity as a condition of life, and, those that have focused more on labour precarity. In so doing, I argued the need for a dual approach to precariousness that opens up space to explore both deep-rooted emotions and feelings whilst simultaneously focusing on the importance of the everyday, often practical, experiences (and challenges) of living, and waiting, in the UK asylum system. The section went on to show that those in the asylum system not only experience precariousness but, due to their "fear of return to persecution" (Waite et al., 2013; 26) are hyper-precarious. As such, the chapter opened up the scope to extend work on precarity by showing some of the ways temporality, power and precariousness interplay (Chapters 5 and 8), developing understandings of precarious temporality (Chapter 5), utilising a dual approach to precariousness (Chapters 6, 7 and 9), as well as more broadly expanding our understanding of hyper-precarious lives.

Through drawing this literature together, I have provided a theoretical framework for this thesis. It opens up the possibility to look at how temporal power is produced, maintained and challenged within the asylum system and what life (and the condition of life) is like for those who live, and wait, in this system. In the next chapter, I turn to the methodological approach that was utilised to collect the data.

Chapter 4: An Ethnography of the Everyday

An ethnographic approach was taken to this thesis. An ethnography is concerned with the everyday and allows for an in-depth study of the often overlooked and sometimes ‘mundane’ actions of day-to-day life (Pink, 2000, 2013). As such, ethnography allows the (extra)ordinariness of daily life to be seen and known (Ybema et al., 2009.) Furthermore, it opens the space for exploring the temporality of life as an ethnography does not usually happen on one day, in one place, but in many places over many months. In this thesis, this methodological approach opened up the space to explore the everyday lives of women as they navigated, lived and waited in the UK asylum system.

In this chapter I firstly outline why ethnography is useful in exploring everyday life before secondly looking in depth at the approach taken to the ethnographic fieldwork in this project. Thirdly, I introduce the women who gave their time to this study. Fourthly, I provide some ethical reflections on the process of conducting this ethnography of the spaces of everyday life. Finally, I turn to look inwards at my positionality. Here, after briefly providing some information about myself, I consider how my mental health affected, and was affected by, the research. In doing this the chapter not only outlines the approach taken to the ethnographic fieldwork but provides a reflective look at the practices and processes that produced this ethnographic account.

4.1 Why an Ethnography?

Ethnography comes from the Greek *ethnos* (the nation) and *graphē* (writing), referring most commonly to in-depth studies of particular communities or places. At its heart ethnography is a study of the everyday, with the term often referring not only to the methods used but also the writing produced: it can be understood as a methodological approach to everyday life. It has a long history within geography (Gregory et al., 2009) and unsurprisingly, over that time the style, methods and uses of ethnography have changed considerably. Early ethnographic studies have been criticized for their role in producing colonial ideas about ‘natives’ that helped justify certain policies of control and domination during British colonization (see Gregory et al., 2009). More recently,

ethnography has come under attack for its lack of reflexivity, causing ethnographers to begin to discuss and consider how their positionality and subjectivity affects their research and understanding (Pink, 2013). As Pink (2013; 22) explains, ethnography should be seen as

a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced. This may entail reflexive, collaborative or participatory methods. It may involve informants in a variety of ways at different points of the research and representational stages of the project. It should account not only for the observable, recordable realities that may be translated into written notes and texts, but also for objects, visual images, the immaterial and the sensory nature of human experience and knowledge.

As such, ethnography situates the researcher within the work, focusing not just on what is 'said' or 'seen' but on a dynamic range of sensory and embodied experiences. It provides a way of studying the textures of everyday life. Ybema et al. (2009; 1-2) notes that "the very 'ordinariness' of normality often prevents us from seeing it: we tend have a blind spot for what is usual, ordinary [and] routine". The everyday tends so often to be overlooked, however through immersing ourselves in, and later reflecting on it the (*extra*)ordinariness of it can be seen and known (Ybema et al., 2009; 1). As a practice, ethnography is a cohesive approach to research design; it should not only be seen as a methodology for fieldwork but as a broad approach to research that is reflective (Pink, 2013). In this context the written work, the ethnographic account, can be read "as a 'wrap-up' of any specific concerns within a broader attention" (Humphreys and Watson, 2009; 40 -41) to the "cultural whole" (Baszanger and Dodier, 1997; 13) of the ethnographic process. It can be seen as the way the work comes together and is reflected on, how the researcher 'joins the dots' between particular people, times and places.

Ethnography is often seen as an account of a group "which may focus on a particular aspect of life in that setting" (Watson, 2008; 100). However, recent geographical work, particularly looking at migration, has observed that the way people live their lives today means it is not uncommon for participants to move across multiple settings and be more

mobile than the researcher (Amit, 2000). As such, the researcher has to learn to be fluid and not only join the dots between people in particular places and times but between places and times. The researcher has to “try to keep up with them” (Amit, 2000; 12), to track the timespaces in which people move, through which they connect with and affect each other (May and Thrift, 2001; 5). An ethnographic approach can be useful in tracking these movements as it is not restricted to one setting but is embedded in people’s everyday lives. It documents and observes people’s actions. It can be fluid and allow the participants to lead the direction of the research while providing a space for the researcher to reflect on what they have heard, seen and experienced (Ybema et al., 2009, Pink, 2013).

In this study an ethnographic approach to fieldwork allowed me to track the movements of the women as they lived out their day-to-day lives. The study follows the women as they faced seemingly extraordinary challenges, as they lived in uncertainty and as they were displaced, relocated and detained. Simultaneously it opened up the space to look at how these women went about ordinary, often mundane, daily tasks: going to the shop, attending appointments, going to local groups, and taking children to school. The ethnographic account that follows, that has been laid out on the pages of this thesis, provided a space for me to reflect on what I had seen, heard and experienced. While the account relies heavily on the words of the women who I worked with, it also draws links across their lives. It reflects on the way the asylum system can be experienced differently by different bodies in different timespaces, and the way these experiences can extend out from the place they occur to impact on other bodies in other times and places (see particularly, Chapter 5) -The way policies and practices of the asylum system affect the daily lives of people seeking asylum.

4.2 Ethnographic Fieldwork

While ethnography should be about a whole methodological approach to research, there is a risk that ethnographic fieldwork can become interviewing in a less formal or structured way. During my fifteen months of fieldwork, I consciously worked to avoid the ‘interview setting’. In this section I will firstly explain why I wanted to avoid this before laying out how I approached the fieldwork stages of the ethnography.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with interviews; they provide “rich, detailed and multi-layered” accounts of people’s lives (Silverman, 2011; 15) and have been utilised successfully in many studies to explore the experiences of people who are seeking asylum. However, within interviews there is a tendency for people to perform in socially desirable ways, meaning that the types of knowledge produced within interview settings may be limited. This is likely to be exaggerated for people seeking asylum as for a person to gain sanctuary in the UK they are required to re-tell certain, often gendered, narratives and perform in certain ways throughout the asylum process, constantly reproducing ‘their asylum story’ (Oswin, 2001, Oxford, 2005, Freedman, 2008a). This may make it difficult for research with people seeking asylum that relies entirely on interviews to move beyond these narratives (Oxford, 2005, Smith, 2016). Furthermore, the process of interviewing risks reproducing an asylum interview, with the interviewer becoming seen as part of the immigration system, and the whole process potentially becoming harrowing and painful for the participant (Tyler, 2010). It is therefore important for the researcher to distinguish themselves from others the participant may encounter, particularly those ‘others’ that may hold power over the participant's life (Hynes, 2003).

Through working outside of the interview setting to engage with participants in their everyday lives, researchers may be able to distinguish themselves from these ‘others’. Using an ethnography of the everyday, it allows the researcher to also explore other ways of knowing, beyond the oral, to a fuller range of sensory and embodied experiences that affect people seeking asylum’s day-to-day lives. While interviews may be useful to have in-depth conversations about people's experiences of gender and power within the asylum system, ethnography does this while also allowing the researcher to see and experience, albeit through this subjective lens, some of these processes in action (Pink, 2013).

This ethnographic approach enabled me to look in depth at how eight women lived while waiting in the UK asylum process to provide rich and textured detail of their experiences and think about how this linked to wider processes such as the production of lives of precarity (Butler, 2006, 2016), the effects of waiting and the temporality of the asylum process. In comparison to some interview-based studies, eight women may seem a small number, but the in-depth nature of ethnographic work allowed me to spend a considerable amount of time with each person. Indeed, I met each woman about once a month over a 9- to 12-month period, producing over 60 hours of recordings and around

80 photos, along with many pages of field notes. I shall now turn to look in more depth at how I conducted this ethnography and how I both avoided, and at times struggled to avoid, the 'interview setting'.

4.2.1 Recruitment and Field Journal

The conscious act of trying to avoid the interview setting began before I met any of the women in my study. I utilised the Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network directory (see *lassn.org.uk*) to identify potential organisations through which I could volunteer and meet participants. After contacting several organisations and explaining my research I found three to volunteer with. One was a 'welcoming service' and so engaged with people as soon as they had been dispersed to Leeds, providing access to women relatively early in the asylum process (see Chapters 2 and 6 for more on dispersal) and two organisations that work specifically with women. Through the first organisation I was also put in touch with another two asylum support groups (a drop-in service and campaigning organisation) that I attended a few times each to meet people and give out some information on the project.

In some ways working with these organisations could be seen as undesirable, as it can be viewed as part of the 'officialdom' that the researcher ideally separates themselves from (Hynes, 2003). However, practically speaking the groups provided one of the few ways of accessing this population. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the groups gave me a chance to meet and get to know women before asking them to take part in the research and helped me establish my legitimacy (Hynes, 2003). The groups were spaces where I could build relationships and trust outside the interview setting, in a place that women who are seeking asylum already engaged with as part of their daily routines.

From the start of my volunteering I was open and honest about who I was and about the project: I carefully explained the research while also emphasising people I met were not obliged to take part. As I was also only looking to work with women I had to be careful when engaging with non-women so that they were not left feeling their stories and experiences were less important. To support this, I produced a project flyer and information sheet that I would verbally explain and then give to people to take away and pass on to anyone who may be interested (Appendix 1). I also actively invited people to ask questions and provided contact details should they want to speak to me at a later date. As phone credit can be expensive I made it clear that they could text, call or email

me if they had any questions and I would call them back. I also emphasised that my volunteering within the organisation was not subject to their participation in the research. In addition, when working in mixed-gender organisations I was careful to ensure I listened attentively to people of all genders.

Through working with the groups' facilitators, I tried to minimise the impact my research had on these groups' normal activities. In practice this meant there were a few occasions where I did not have the chance to offer information sheets to all attendees and instead just gave them to individuals who I spoke to in-depth. Once I had introduced myself I tended to find that the research had minimal impact on the group's activities and while people may be interested in what I was doing, it did not seem to result in people feeling obliged to take part. Indeed, despite regular volunteering and meeting over 100 people seeking asylum across the groups and organisations, it took me several months to recruit all eight participants. While this approach to recruitment took longer than planned, it was beneficial to me as a researcher, as it developed my broader understanding of the condition(s) of life for people seeking asylum. Furthermore, it gave me time to build relationships with some of the women who eventually partook in the study outside the research setting.

The main disadvantage of this recruitment method was that those who did partake in my research were involved, to a greater or lesser extent, in asylum support groups. In addition, due to the lack of funding for a translator, I could only recruit people who spoke English, or as happened in one case, an individual who had a family member who spoke English (something with its own research challenges and ethical dilemmas, see Krishna and Noor below). These two factors likely affected my account. Indeed, as I highlight in Chapter 8, speaking English may well have made the women more resilient to the process than those who face greater language barriers or who are isolated from other people with similar experiences.

Throughout this recruitment period, and continuing for the duration of the research, I also kept a field journal in which I documented my observations of what I saw, felt and experienced. This is a detailed source of information, but I have used it sparingly in this thesis. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, I wish to privilege the voices of my participants. While knowledge is subjective and socially constructed (see Pink, 2013) by focusing on their words this goes some way to countering the way some voices - their voices - are often "deliberately silenced" or "preferably unheard" within society (Roy,

2004: unpagged, Smith, 2016). Secondly, and particularly importantly during this first stage of research, I did not have time to gain meaningful informed consent (Du Toit, 1980) from all those I worked with in these groups. Therefore, while this field journal provided me with a rich context through which to extend, and embed, my understanding, it would not, in my opinion, be appropriate to provide many details here. Nonetheless, this field journal is an important part of the ethnographic process. The notes helped me keep track of my thoughts and observations and identify themes. Furthermore, it provided me with the space to start to link what I was observing in the women's day-to-day lives to wider theoretical ideas and for me to process some of the more emotionally challenging elements of research, something I return to below.

4.2.2 Getting to Know My Participants, Ongoing Contact and Closing the Fieldwork

I had known five of the women through the groups for some time before they decided to take part in the research. The remaining three I had only met briefly, one agreeing to take part when I phoned her as part of my work with the welcoming project and the other two recruited from one-off events I attended. Despite the differing ways women entered the research process, I conducted most of the first meetings in a similar way. While I may have known some of the women, entering their accommodation (the location all my participants chose for our initial meeting) with a Dictaphone in tow is very different to seeing a volunteer at a group.

When setting the meeting up I would call the women to explain that this was a chance for them to ask me any questions about the project, for us to get to know each other a little more and that if they took part there would be a few bits of paperwork to sign, repeating this explanation when arriving at their accommodation. The initial meetings were particularly important in setting the tone for the research that followed. I was keen not to reproduce the asylum interview setting, to not cause people to have to re-tell 'their asylum story' so I opened with a general question about 'how they were doing'. All but one of my participants at this point began to tell me, to a greater or lesser extent, the reason they were seeking asylum and what had happened to them in terms of their asylum case since arriving in the UK. Despite my efforts to try and avoid people feeling a need to reproduce the narrative they have to tell the Home Office, lawyers, and so many other people they meet, this was still the first thing they chose to do. I did not interrupt them and consciously chose to listen to these narratives. I only interjected if they seemed to become upset (as many did), or if they seemed hesitant, looking for reassurance from

me that this is what I wanted to hear - utilising this opportunity to make clear, while I was happy to listen they in no way had to tell me this information and that my research was focused on what they did in a day-to-day sense.

In some ways then, this initial meeting ended up reproducing the 'interview setting', and associated 'asylum narratives' that I had wanted to avoid. However, this information did provide useful context for the research. Importantly, as I was told in the closing meeting by several of the women, it also helped the women feel heard and believed - something that can be particularly important given the 'culture of disbelief' that many of the women find themselves living with (see Hynes, 2003, 2011, Temple and Moran, 2006, Anderson et al., 2014). In order to help set the tone for future meetings I would always ensure this meeting ended talking about everyday things: if they liked the shops in their local area; what time school pickup was; or what activities they did in the week. At the end of this first meeting I also double checked they were happy to continue with the research. Finally, I would set up the next of our 8-10, roughly monthly, meetings and remind them that I would happily meet at their house or anywhere else that was convenient to them, including going to events or any other activities that were part of their routines.

Following on from this initial meeting the majority of the contact with the women was in their accommodation. However, for those who were displaced during the research period this was not always the same accommodation (see Appendix 2). Visiting the women in these different settings helped give me a good understanding of the precarious landscape of accommodation these women lived with (see particularly Chapter 6). On several occasions I also met the women in public spaces such as cafes. In addition, I attended with my participants a community choir, a Home Office reporting centre, several asylum group events and visited one of my participants when she was detained. This, along with the volunteering work I had done and the photo tours, something I come to below, gave me a deep understanding of how the women lived while they waited in the UK asylum process.

As the women chose to predominantly meet me in their accommodation this had the benefit of providing a relatively private space in which we could discuss intimate topics (Finch, 1993, Pink, 2000, 2013). However, when accommodation was shared, there was always the possibility of being interrupted. That said, the longitudinal nature of this study provided flexibility, allowing a topic to be returned to later. The meetings were relatively informal, with questions focused around very everyday topics. This may seem mundane,

but it provided a way for me to move away from an 'asylum narrative' to focus on the detail of everyday life. For instance, a conversation may start by me asking how their day was going and they may tell me they had taken their child to school that morning. Through asking follow-up questions I could find out about how/if women use public transport, how they engage with other parents at the playground, what their sense of belonging was, or how they felt if they could not buy things for their children. When asked questions about myself I would also disclose information, allowing the women to get to know me and reciprocating some of the information exchange. The focus however was listening to the women and the relationships that followed was one where they predominantly talked and I predominantly asked questions and listened.

Each time we met I return to similar opening questions. This not only allowed the women to lead the direction of the conversation but also for me to track the way day-to-day life was affected by the asylum process: I could look at how 'hearing something' or 'hearing nothing' about their case affected their well-being and the day-to-day rhythms of life. Furthermore, as the research developed topics would come up that I'd want to ask other women about. When doing this I maintained anonymity by omitting, or changing, personal details and generalising accounts. At about the half-way point, I took stock of my research by looking over the field journal. From this I developed several topics that I wanted to cover with all the women,

- What they thought of their housing/accommodation situation
- How/if they engaged with asylum groups and other organisations and why they chose to
- What impact having/not having family in the UK had on them
- What impact the asylum system had on them particularly in terms of trusting people and having a sense of belonging to a place
- Whether the asylum process had affected their saving/shopping habits and acquiring of material belongings
- Whether they plan for the future

The closing meetings were structured slightly differently to the rest of the research process. I worked to ensure these happened in a relatively private place so we could cover anything that had not yet been talked about – they all ended up taking place at the women’s accommodation. After asking the women how they were I explained I had a form for us to fill in. This ensured we covered all the topics above and also asked them to comment on the research process. In addition, this gave me the chance to ask for any demographic or contextual information that I did not have; however, I did not push the women to give me any details they were not comfortable sharing. Finally, the questions opened up the space for them to talk about anything else they felt was important that we may not have covered in our conversations.

After completing this I also repeated the consent process from the first meeting. Consent is an ongoing process, and it is only at the end of the research that people can know what they have said and what they have given consent to. At this point I also asked Noor, Krishna’s daughter, to give consent as in many ways she had become my ninth participant, acting not only as interpreter for her mother but also often providing her own opinions and interpretations. Finally, I would give the participants the £30 ‘thank you’ payment that had been agreed at the outset. To my surprise several of the women had forgotten that they would be receiving this money - I had wrongly assumed that all the women were partaking in the research for this. This realisation was particularly humbling as it also came with comments about how they had enjoyed talking to me. I note this because it highlights the value in listening and the importance of ensuring people feel heard when conducting research with people who find themselves often silenced (Finch, 1993, Roy, 2004). In the cases of the asylum system it may also highlight the value in asking people how they are and about their everyday life rather, than asking them to reproduce the same, often gendered, ‘asylum narratives’ (Oswin, 2001, Oxford, 2005, Freedman, 2008a). In addition to this closing meeting I also sent all the women ‘thank you’ cards, and while these cannot really convey how much I appreciated them taking the time to work with me, I hope they at least provided some positive post (see Chapter 5 for more on post). However, this was not the end to my contact with some of the women.

One of the reasons I chose to conduct this final meeting in a very different way was to mark the end of the fieldwork. Research is an emotional process and ethnography can, and in this case, did, result in in-depth involvement in people's lives (Bourgois, 2003, Pink, 2013). Relationships had been formed, and therefore an understanding of how to

manage these beyond the research period needed to be developed. As Bourgois (2003) found, continuing contact was a natural next step for the researcher and also opened up the opportunity for further data to be gathered. It was beneficial to both him and the participants, offering not only a way to manage the relationships he had developed beyond the end of the research but also providing the opportunity to update his book with a new epilogue, adding depth to the findings. With this in mind, I entered the research period intending to continue relationships beyond the end of the formal research phase. To manage this expectation, I used the final meeting to also ask the women if they wished to stay in touch after the research and talked to them about what this may look like, agreeing relatively informal approaches. As I was still involved with some asylum organisations I would see many of the women there and they would also occasionally text me and I would call them back. On one occasion someone also asked me to help them move some stuff from the house in my car and on another I supported someone when they had to attend a legal hearing. While the women continue to have my contact number the relationships generally petered out. When I moved cities about a year later this also created a natural end to my involvement in the local asylum organisations, and to my ongoing contact with the remainder of the women.

In this section I have outlined how the majority of the meetings took place. I looked at the types of settings the meetings occurred in, the sorts of questions that were asked and how relationships were managed. Before I go on to introduce the women who gave their time to the study, and explore some of the ethical and practical considerations, I want to look in more depth at one part of my ethnographic fieldwork - the photo tours.

4.2.4 Photo Tours: Walking, Talking and Seeing

Visual Ethnography uses images (in this case photos) to look beyond a strictly oral and written account, and has been identified as a particularly useful tool in exploring the 'mundane', ordinary parts of people's day-to-day lives (see Pink, 2013). Photos can be taken as the participant moves around their home and other spaces they engage with during their day-to-day life. This allows people to reflect on spaces, places and objects that they may not normally think about (Radley et al., 2005) moving the conversation away from the 'bigger picture' to focus in on the detail of everyday life (Pink, 2013). However, as Pink (2013; 32) explains, "visual research methods' are not purely visual" as "neither a purely visual ethnography nor an exclusively visual approach to culture can exist", rather "these visible elements of experiences will be given different meanings as

different people use their own subjective knowledge to interpret them". Visual ethnography is best done in collaboration with research participants in ways that provide people the space to explain why particular objects or places matter. It can be empowering as participants can lead the direction of the conversation and shape the narratives that the ethnographer is producing (Pink, 2013).

When working across cultures visual ethnography can also provide several other advantages, over purely verbal techniques. Firstly, visual ethnography can be useful when people have varying levels of English and can structure conversation with visual images acting as a prompt or tool through which the narrative is constructed. Secondly, visual ethnography can draw out stories that may otherwise not have been shared. When working across cultures this is particularly important; the significance of places, objects or events may vary due to cultural, as well as personal differences between the researcher and researched. Thirdly, through reflecting back on images with participants the research may draw out some ideas or meanings that may have been otherwise overlooked (Datta, 2009, Brown, 2011). Finally, photos have been highlighted as a particularly useful tool for working with migrants as it provides a way for the researcher to 'try to keep up with' the movements of people (Amit, 2000). Visual narratives can connect across a range of scales from the transnational to the everyday as "they bridge across spaces of transnational migration, urban mobilities and embodied experience... [making telling points about] ... the categories of near/far, home/ abroad, migrant/other" (Datta, 2012; 1738). Thus, they provide a useful tool not only for negotiating cultural and language differences between the researcher and researched but also to explore the tensions and connections, the nears and fars, the heres and theres, which are such an intricate part of people who are seeking asylum's lives (also see Chapter 6).

In this study I worked with my participants to develop and conduct photo tours of their accommodation and local area. I had initially hoped participants would hold the camera and physically take the photos as Pink (2013) had noted this could be a more empowering way of conducting photo tours. However, I quickly found people were uncomfortable taking the camera so instead I took the majority of the images. I engaged the women by asking open questions that allowed them to pick where we went and if we took photos. I also continued to use the camera after the photo tours had occurred, and would occasionally, with my participants consent, take photos of other activities or items, taking around 80 photos in total.

The socio-legal situation, and wider precarious landscape, that people who are seeking asylum find themselves living in made it particularly important to carefully consider how, when and if to take photos. As Mountz (2011; 384) notes the principal “first do no harm” becomes especially poignant when dealing with populations whose legal rights and lives may be at risk. Before starting a photo tour, I discussed with my participants what could be included and encourage them to come up with ideas as to what they may want to look at. I also reassured them the photos would not have any identifiable information. As I took the photos I continuously, carefully, moved the lens so images did not include any names (including road names), documents, or other things that may have identified people (e.g. family photos). After the tours I went through the photos with my participants and checked they were happy with the images deleting any they were unsure about, further evaluating the images outside the fieldwork setting cropping or deleting as needed.

After much consideration I decided to use photos of people’s living spaces in this ethnography. This was because the visual impact of the images emphasised the bareness of people’s homes (see Chapter 6). An important factor in my decision was that between taking the photos and the writing up of this thesis almost all the women will have moved accommodation. None-the-less in publishing these images I do not link individuals to particular living spaces with the exception of Photos 1, 8 and 9. Photo 1 was shown to me by Nadia after she had moved out, it did not include any of her personal items and was of a hostel setting with a high turnover of people. The other images (Photos 8 and 9) were both taken outside and are mostly of the ground and so do not identify the house in the same way as other photos might.

Outside the house I followed a similar process asking people to take me on a walk round the local area showing me things that were important to them or places they went to regularly. If people were not sure where to go I suggested we could follow the same route they would take to go to the shops, church or a local group. One woman was not well enough to take me on a walk and instead suggested we went and sat on a local bench that she sometimes went to (see Rishbeth et al., 2017 for a discussion on talking on benches - including information on the 'refugees welcome in parks' project). This was about five minutes from her house and provided a view of the local park and city from which she talked to me about the different places she went, gesturing to places as she talked.

When planning this method what I did not expect was that the act of ‘walking and talking’, (or in the last case sitting and talking in this outdoors setting) would become just as valuable as the process of taking photos. As my field journal noted:

The process of walking and talking seems to bring up different types of conversation and allows people to speak more freely. In some ways I am finding this more useful than the photographs themselves [...] As we move between places people have pointed out things that they would have probably not otherwise brought up or mentioned. It can feel more relaxed and less intense than in the house

In most conversations, apart from occasional interruptions, the dynamic tended to be between myself and the participant - one body facing another. However, ones moving or sitting on the park bench it seemed to me a third, or perhaps even force ‘body’ (or ‘object’) entered the interaction. There was myself, my participant, the environment around us and, in the photo tours, the lens of the camera. When you walk and talk, or sit on a bench next to one another, the gaze is not on the other person but also on the environment around (Bynon and Rishbeth, 2015, Rishbeth et al., 2017). I found the focus shifted literally, and metaphorically, with different types of subjective knowledge being produced. As has been noted, walking and talking can unsettle traditional research relationships (see Anderson, 2004, Brown and Durrheim, 2009, Pink, 2013). It can be seen as a “stretching of roles for researcher/participant and participant/leader” (Brown and Durrheim, 2009; 23). Here it shifted the lens of the research and, to some degree, the power dynamic as the women could not only direct the conversation but also the gaze of the camera and the physical direction in which we walked.

Walking and talking can be seen as “an ideal technique for exploring issues around people’s relationship with space” (Jones et al., 2008; unpagged). It tracks movements in and through space allowing for analysis of the subjective significance of being in, near or between spaces (McGuinness and Spinney, 2006). However, as Jones et al. (2008; unpagged) note, some research overlooks the connections between “what people say” and “where they say it”. I would argue photo tours can be seen as one way of drawing out these connections. The act of moving around with a camera makes place matter. Furthermore, as someone talks whilst walking it prompts “knowledge recollection and production” (Anderson, 2004; 254, also see Brown and Durrheim, 2009). Photo tours make not only place but time, timespace, matter. The act of taking photos grounded this research in particular times and places, yet the choosing of where to take photos, and

the seeing of places, triggered past memories, while inevitably also creating new ones. The photo tours caused the women in my study to focus on their current everyday lives while simultaneously thinking of past events. In the house the photos particularly put a lens on the maintenance of the accommodation, people would speak in detail, for instance, about the effect a window being broken had on their daily lives. While, on walks around the local area discussions often turned to everyday acts such as the school run, the first few days in the area or shopping. These conversations could often casually move between the present and past or/and the near and far. For instance, in seeing the bus stop, Hiruni said she needed to get the bus later before talking about the kindness of a stranger she met when she first arrived in the area.

The effect photo tours had on this research further emphasise the importance of the setting in which research is conducted. In this research they helped me, at least briefly, avoid a traditional interview setting by changing the dynamic between the 'researcher' and 'researched'. Furthermore, photo tours provided a timespace where different kinds of knowledge could be produced. The act of walking, talking and seeing created different "ethnographic fictions" (Pink, 2013; 22), that touched on the tactile, practical and emotional, the near and far, and past and present, elements of the women's lives, adding to understandings of everyday life in this research.

4.3 The Women Who Gave Their Time

In this section I will introduce the women who gave their time to this ethnography. In this study I have changed the names; however, anonymity is about more than simply a name (Scheper-Hughes, 2000, Stein, 2010). For this reason, these biographies have been kept relatively brief, providing the reader context for the work without, I hope, compromising the women's anonymity - something that is of increased importance working with this precarious population. The level of detail also varies, as some women were more comfortable than others sharing information, particularly around why they were seeking asylum, so I have taken this into account when developing these narratives. Further detail specifically on the women's accommodation and movements can be found in Appendix 2.

Hiruni

Hiruni spent her childhood between family in Sri Lanka and Saudi Arabia where she lived with her parents in a gated community. She had attended an international school where she was taught in English and had achieved her international baccalaureate qualification. In her early 20s she was married and had her son, who by the time I met him was in his early teens. After experiencing severe domestic abuse in this marriage, she got divorced. At this point her family had tried to force her into a new marriage. She did not want to get re-married, fearing this would result in further abuse, and was worried that her son may see more violence. She told me she did not want him growing up thinking it was okay to treat women this way. Having been to the UK previously on holiday she decided that coming here, with her son, was a way they could escape this situation and seek safety. On arrival she asked for help at a police station and was told she needed to seek asylum, something she then went on to do almost immediately. By the time I met her she had been in the UK for one year and 10 months and, after an initial refusal, was working to put in fresh evidence on her case.

Krishma and Noor

Krishma was in the UK with her 17-year-old son and 18-year-old daughter. While she understood some English, she spoke very little and so her daughter, Noor, joined us for all our meetings and in many ways became my ninth participant. Using family members to translate is not ideal (Freedman, 2008b, Gray et al., 2011); It may result in people not wanting to share certain intimate details and/or in a partial or filtered translation as family members may add their own interpretations of events. I found that while Noor often used her own words or additional opinions, she did not actively change what her mother said. Indeed her mother understood enough English to correct her daughter if she felt she had misrepresented something she was trying to say. It is much harder to say whether having Noor present prevented Krishma from talking about certain topics. What I do know is that having them talk with each other often opened new avenues to the conversation. Their differing interpretations and understandings of life added depth to the research.

The reason the family were seeking asylum in the UK may have been one reason for this open relationship. In Pakistan Krishma had experienced domestic abuse. It was at the point at which her husband, with the support of his wider family, decided he wanted Noor to marry that Krishma decided to come to the UK. She wanted her daughter to have a

different life and believed Noor would be forced to marry if they remained. Krishma had also received threats to her and her children's life since leaving Pakistan. A blood relative had also been attacked in Pakistan by her husband due, at least in part, to her leaving. The family had already been in the asylum process for three years by the time I met them. Both children had been going to school and college during this time and Noor explained to me that she felt like she knew the UK as well as Pakistan, having spent her late teenage years here. While Krishma's son was rarely ever present during our meetings, other Pakistani women, many of whom were also seeking asylum, would sometimes 'pop in' unannounced and on one occasion I was invited to a gathering to help Krishma, Noor and some of their female friends prepare for Eid. During the time I worked with them a fresh claim that they had put in got rejected and they spent a few busy days trying to gather fresh evidence for their case.

Barkisu

Barkisu had been living in the UK for five years, and had been in the asylum system for just over a year at the time I met her. She had first come to the UK from Gambia on her husband's visa but when that marriage broke down it became unsafe for her to return. Her family in Gambia had threatened to kill her when her ex-husband informed them that she is bisexual. She had found this out from her sister, who did still occasionally phone, but who also begged her not to return as she feared for Barkisu's life. After some time living on the streets and with strangers (see Chapter 6) she found out about asylum and made a claim. When I first met her, she was not living in NASS accommodation as she was living with a man she referred to as her husband⁴. This meant she 'failed' the destitution test and so had no access to support (see Chapters 2 and 6). Due to domestic violence this new relationship also broke down and she eventually moved into charity-provided accommodation before, after several months, gaining access to Section 4 support, and moving into NASS accommodation. During the research process she was also often ill. She had diabetes and, like many of my participants, suffered with anxiety and depression. This, coupled with her precarious housing situation, at times, made it difficult to contact her as she could be withdrawn.

⁴ This is how she referred to him, though their exact marital status was never clear, and I believe they were not legally married.

Rashmi

Rashmi had moved from Sri Lanka to London with her husband, 10-year-old daughter and three-year-old son about two and a half years before I met her. In one meeting she showed me some photos of their time in London - pictures of the family on the London eye, in their beautifully decorated home and outside Buckingham Palace - telling me how much she had enjoyed living there. This was in stark contrast to their now bare and empty NASS house in Leeds, in which she did not even have a desk or any storage for her children (see Chapter 6 for more on accommodation). After about a year and a half of living in London the situation in Sri Lanka had changed, the family could not return, at which point they put in a claim for asylum and had been dispersed to Leeds. Once in Leeds it had taken her several months to secure a school place for her daughter at a Catholic secondary school. While they would have been given a place slightly quicker at the local school, the family were devout Catholics and it was important to her that her daughter attended an appropriate school.

During the time I knew Rashmi she became pregnant with her third child and gave birth 2 months before the end of the fieldwork period. She was about 7 months pregnant at the same time the family were going through the asylum appeals process. At one point she had to stay in hospital as the stress had raised her blood pressure and put her baby at risk, when I next saw her she explained to me that the nurses told her to try to relax but that she found it difficult when waiting to hear news on the case.

Nadia

At nearly 50 Nadia was the oldest of the women I worked with. She had 4 children, two grown-up daughters, and two teenage sons, all of whom still lived in Gambia. While she had occasional contact with her eldest daughter, her ex-husband ensured she did not speak to any of the other children, something she found extremely painful and only briefly spoke to me about.

In Gambia she had worked as a nurse and advocated against female genital mutilation (FGM). While she herself had had this procedure as a child, the reason she left was that her husband and his mother had started saying that FGM had not been performed properly, and she would need to have further FGM. As someone working to reduce this she not only felt strongly that she did not want the procedure but that it would be

dangerous for her health. This disagreement triggered a cycle of domestic abuse and she feared she would not only be forced to have FGM if she returned but that she would be killed for leaving her husband.

She initially came to the UK on a visitor's visa at which time she lived with a 'friend'. In this house she ended up doing a lot of cooking and cleaning, when the visa ran out the friend decided it was no longer appropriate for her to stay and she found herself destitute. After some time on the streets someone at a local organisation told her she could claim asylum. On putting in a claim for asylum and asking for help, she was detained before eventually being dispersed to Leeds. At the time I met her she was destitute, living in charity-supported accommodation, and looking to put in a fresh asylum claim. This was eventually accepted, and she was placed on Section 4 support and moved to a hostel before being moved again to shared NASS accommodation. She'd already been in the asylum process over two years and in the UK for over three years when I met her but told me she felt no closer to finding safety.

Tharushi

Tharushi did not wish to talk to me in any depth about why she was claiming asylum, she simply explained that her husband had put in a claim due to political reasons and that it was not safe for them to return to Sri Lanka. She and her husband had been waiting in the asylum system for three years when I met them and unfortunately received their first refusal during the time I knew them. Around the time of this refusal, Tharushi, who had always been a practising Muslim, told me in this moment of 'crisis' she had found comfort in praying and attending the mosque regularly. While waiting in the asylum system Tharushi gave birth to her daughter, who turned three during the research process. A lot of her day was focused around caring for her daughter. While she utilised free nursery provision, this only provided a few hours a week and she spent a lot of time walking to and from the nursery to drop off and pick up her child. Her husband was often in the house during our meetings but I only saw him once or twice as he spent most of his time upstairs in bed. Tharushi explained to me that her husband was very depressed and would go through periods where he rarely came downstairs or engaged in activities.

Sara

Sara was in the UK with her 4-year-old son. Originally from Albania, she had moved to Greece with her family as a child. In Greece she had married an Albanian man, and had her son. After experiencing domestic abuse, she had fled to the UK. At 22 she was the youngest of my participants and when I met her had been in the UK for a year and a half. She had also recently been moved from Section 95 support to Section 4; although still receiving cash support because she had a child, she had been relocated to a two-bedroom house that she shared with another woman and her child. During the research period she was detained with her now 5-year-old son. The Home Office had wished to deport her to Albania, a country she felt was not safe and that she had never lived in as an adult. While her lawyer prevented the deportation and she was returned to Leeds, the detention had a dramatic effect on her and her child. After being detained she was much more withdrawn and suffered health problems (see Chapter 5). While by the end of the research process she was slightly better, she informed me that she was worried she would be detained again and her son was having counselling as the detention had left him 'mentally ill' and self-harming.

Grace

When I first met Grace, she had been dispersed to Leeds and had just been placed in NASS accommodation following a week in a hostel. She was the only one of the women I worked with to receive leave to remain during the research period - She was in the asylum process for approximately seven months in total and had one refusal, which she successfully appealed.

Grace had moved from Nigeria with her husband and three youngest children approximately seven years before claiming asylum. Her two eldest children still lived in Nigeria and her husband had recently been imprisoned in the UK. After her husband's imprisonment her and her three children were evicted from the house. Worried that she would be on the streets with her children a friend told her about how to claim asylum. She could not, as had been suggested to her by the landlord, "*simply return to Nigeria*" due to threats from her extended family: Since being in the UK her extended family had come to believe that she was a witch and had caused a miscarriage of another family member's child. Her sons in Nigeria had told her that the family were threatening to kill her if she returned. From conversations with her it was not clear as to whether or not she

believed she was a witch but what was clear was that this set of events had caused her to become a devout Christian, as she believed that this would “*cleanse her*” of any past wrongdoing.

On receiving leave to remain, Grace was given 28 days to move out of the NASS accommodation. I met her shortly after she had moved into a council house. When talking with her I found out her and her three children had not received benefits for several weeks and were relying on the kindness of others at their church. As she was the only one of my participants to receive leave to remain during the research period I have not focused on this time in this thesis. However, it is worth noting that gaps in support are not uncommon when people gain asylum (see Doyle, 2014, Basedow and Doyle, 2016).

In introducing these women I have followed the principle “first do no harm” (Mountz, 2011; 384), being selective in what, and how, I included information. In the rest of this thesis I have, and will, follow the same principle, removing or changing identifying details and excluding information that may risk harm to my participants. Through this, I hope I have put the interests of the participants above the interestingness of the data and analysis, while still creating a textured and dynamic ethnography.

4.4 Some Ethical Reflections: Navigating the Intimate Spaces of Day-To-Day Life

As an ethnography of the everyday, the ethnographic fieldwork for this thesis involved regularly engaging in aspects of people’s day-to-day lives, not on one day, in one place, but on many occasions over many months. It involved asking the women to open up, through talking, showing and sharing potentially intimate aspects of their lives. In this section I want to provide some ethical reflections considering some of the challenges I faced when navigating these encounters, and what sorts of relationships were formed.

When studying within personal settings, particularly the home, the researcher is likely to be entering the intimate areas of a person's life. They are coming into contact with personal spaces and potentially also interacting with familial and other intimate relationships. Clearly this may have an effect on their findings but, more importantly, it could also affect the lives of the people they are studying. The researcher therefore must stay aware of their presence and should be alert and respectful to the fact there may be

some areas the participants feel uncomfortable entering or discussing. Communication and trust become particularly important in this context.

Trust can be understood as “being able to have confidence in a person or thing” (Hynes, 2003; 60, Cricco-Lizza, 2007). People who are seeking asylum have often learnt to mistrust people in order to survive and once in the UK this mistrust not only continues but is often reinforced due to the “culture of disbelief” within the asylum system (see Hynes, 2003; 60). However, one of the advantages of my ethnographic approach was it gave time to build relationships, and with these relationships could come trust (Coffey, 1999). That said, trust is something that is earned and needs to be continuously negotiated and maintained. It was therefore important for me to recognize how the line between the ‘research’ and ‘researcher’ could become blurred and yet be maintained (Brown and Durrheim, 2009). This required myself, as the researcher, to be constantly reflective about my interactions and to understand the differing women’s attitudes towards the research, to be honest and open, to keep appointments and to continuously listen not only to the women’s experiences, but also the wider tone in the relationship. This was not just a requirement in the field but extended beyond it, as I maintained some of the relationships and chose how, and what, to write in this ethnography. An area where I found this particularly challenging was around the exchange of goods, food and money.

As Hynes (2006) has pointed out, people seeking asylum often face problems with people ‘pitying’ them and do not want to be seen as ‘charity’, yet at the same time participants may be spending money on transport, offering food in their home and even offering to buy the researcher drinks in cafes. For some, being able to offer their guests hospitality may be an important part of maintaining pride and dignity, and offering compensation in return may be seen as inappropriate (see Chapters 6 and 8 for more on ‘guest’, ‘host’ dynamics). Navigating these relationships in any intimate spaces can be complex (see for instance Finch, 1993, Pink, 2013), however in working with people seeking asylum this was compounded by the women and my differing socio-legal and economic positions. One approach I found particularly helpful in tackling this was to make clear from the outset that this research was funded and that it would therefore be the research, not me personally, that was paying for any drinks or reimbursing people for travel expenses. This helped set the tone of these exchanges and highlighted that I was not providing ‘charity’ but rather this was a part of normal practice, an agreement with the funding body. In part

because I could remind the women the funding body was paying, and in part, I suspect, because it was financially difficult for them to refuse (see Chapters 7 and 8), there were never any occasions where I did not pay. That said, there was often a conversation before they agreed I could pay. However, most of the meetings did not happen in cafes or public spaces, but rather in the more private and intimate spaces of the women's accommodation. Here a rather different dynamic played out.

In the accommodation, in their personal living space, I was often offered hospitality. Most of the time I felt I was being "welcomed into the interviewees [sic] house as a guest, not merely tolerated as an Inquisitor" (Finch, 1993; 167). However, this came with its own ethical and emotional considerations, particularly around receiving food. To illustrate this let me turn again to my field journal:

During or after many of the meetings women often offer me food, normally not eating anything themselves. While I have tended to try and insist I'm already full or could only manage a tiny bit any attempts to refuse the food simply became very awkward and so I end up accepting their hospitality. In one case the woman insisted I took the entire meal's worth of food home with me when I claimed to already be quite full and could not eat very much. This woman was destitute [...] only had access to £10 cash a week [from a charity] and this resulted in me sitting in the car crying after the meeting. I get the feeling that for my participants being able to offer their guests food and hospitality is important to their sense of self-worth; nonetheless for me as a researcher accepting this, especially when I already feel they're doing me a favour by giving their time, has been something I found difficult.

Sharing of food "is seen in many cultures as socially desirable and even morally expected behavior" (Waite and Lewis, 2017; 970, also see Slocum and Saldanha, 2016). The women in my study came from a range of backgrounds, and to some it was simply not acceptable to have someone in the living space without offering them something to eat and drink. For some, being able to offer their 'guests' hospitality may also have been an important part of maintaining pride, dignity and self-worth. The onus was on me the researcher, to identify what was and was not appropriate. After initially resisting being offered food I made the conscious decision it was better to accept it and felt it was up to me to manage my resulting emotions.

The principle “first do no harm” (Mountz, 2011; 384), can on the surface seem obvious and simple, however, the reality can be somewhat more complex. Here, by accepting food I would ensure I did not offend my participants or damage their dignity and sense of self-worth; however, I would also be costing them money that they could not afford and potentially risking them going without food or other basics themselves (see Chapter 7). Harm could be done either way. Given the longitudinal nature of the work, I knew this would not be a one-off negotiation and so had to think about the impact of my behaviour on future interactions. However, this also gave me a chance to look for opportunities where I could reciprocate this hospitality. For instance, I would offer my participants lifts in the car or read letters from the Home Office to them (see Chapter 5). These small gestures can be seen as further blurring the boundaries between ‘researched’ and ‘researcher’, but it allowed me to, in some way, reciprocate this hospitality.

This ethnography of the everyday required me, as the researcher, to continuously re-enter people’s lives, including potentially intimate spaces. In this context I had to be reflective about the relationships that formed and the impact I was having on the participants’ lives. Coffey (1999; 47) has noted “[r]elationships we create in the field raise our awareness of the ethnographic dichotomies of, for example, involvement versus detachment, stranger verses friend, distance verses intimacy” and highlight the “inherent tensions of the fieldwork experience” affecting the “ethnographer’s gaze”. The relationships that were created in this research were not ‘friendships’ but were nonetheless meaningful and blurred the lines between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’. These relationships affected both my actions and interactions with participants. They affected my subjective understandings of the situation and have inevitably affected the “ethnographic fictions” that I have produced (Pink, 2013; 22). The research process also affected me personally, and it is to this I now turn.

4.5 Creating Some Space for the Researcher

An ethnography should acknowledge that the sense we make of people’s words and actions is “an expression of our own consciousness” (Cohen and Rapport, 1995; 12, Fernandez, 1995, Pink, 2013). As such, space for reflection and consideration of my positionality seems apt in this ethnography. Positionality should allow us, through recognition of our biases, “to gain insights into how we might approach a research setting, members of particular groups, and how we might seek to engage with

participants” (Bourke, 2014; 2). When done well, it adds insight into the research; however, it too often turns into a statement which simply lists identity information about the researcher. As a relatively ‘typical’ UK redbrick geography PhD student (for some critiques of access to academia see Wakeling et al., 2009, Burke, 2013, Dorling, 2014) I have little new to say on this (for good examples see for instance Hopkins, 2007, Raven-Ellison, 2015). I am sure “my multiple overlapping identities” (Kezar, 2002; 96) affected this research; however, to spend too long on this could make for a rather self-indulgent and unreflective end to this hopefully reflective methodology.

To put it simply, I was in my mid-twenties when starting the PhD, creeping into my thirties when finishing. I am a white British citizen with parents who both did PhDs. I am a woman, which is not to say I had much in common with my participants, but may have helped me gain access to the women’s group. I am not ‘heterosexual’, which admittedly was something I personally battled with disclosing to my participants, and that I did disclose to Barkisu when she told me about her sexuality, something I suspect enabled her to open up further about her sexuality. I am also dyslexic, which at times made writing this work a little frustrating. However, there is one part of my identity, a part we all have, that did come to the fore during this research, that is worth reflecting on; my mental health.

I wish to use the last part of this methodology to provide some in-depth, and at times personal, reflections on how the research process affected my mental health, and how my mental health affected the research. In doing this, I make the case that methodology training should consider how we develop resilience and prepare people emotionally for research (also see Rager, 2005), and the potential role of counselling in producing reflective work: work in which we can better know ourselves and our positionality, where we are better enabled to reflect and cope.

When working with women seeking asylum, it is hardly surprising research can be emotional: these women normally have past experiences of trauma (see Chapter 1), their experiences of coming to the UK can be filled with difficulty and violence (WAST, 2008) and once here, as this thesis documents, their lives can continue to be practically and emotionally precarious. As the researcher, I found myself sitting and listening to these accounts, laughing and crying with the women as they shared their past and current experiences with me. In research, as noted above, relationships are formed so often the researcher, in this case me, will come to care about the participants. This “personal investment in the research process and a degree of emotional attachment to the field

and informants” is something that feminist research advocates (Taylor, 2011; 4) and in ethnographies of the everyday is something that is almost impossible to avoid. However, that is not to say that it is an easy process, or one researchers are prepared for.

Indeed, despite a long history of feminists advocating self-care (see for instance Rager, 2005, Lorde, 2012), academic training rarely covers emotional resilience. Methods courses do not cover self-care, reflective listening or how to cope with conversations around trauma. Nor does the ethics process, or other fieldwork preparation, normally provide more than a brief gesture towards the impact of the research on the researcher. As Wincup (2001; 19) has noted, despite an emotional turn in the social sciences, emotion “is still constructed in opposition to rationality and professionalism [...] Consequently, talking about the personal impact of conducting research is a task with which many academics (including feminists) are uncomfortable”, and therefore avoid, leaving the “novice researcher” unprepared. In this context then, it can hardly be surprising that a disproportionate number of academics, particularly PhD students, suffer mental health problems; one study found one in two PhD students experience psychological distress and one in three is at risk of a psychiatric disorder (Levecque et al., 2017).

I personally battled with my mental health throughout the research process. As ethnography blurs the line between everyday life and fieldwork (Pink, 2000), it is hard to tease apart how much this was to do with the emotional topics, the way we work in academia or my life beyond the field. Nonetheless, over my time in the field (and after this), I suffered severe anxiety and depression, and this affected not only my wellbeing but also my ability to conduct this research. While I kept a field journal, I did not start transcribing or writing this method while gathering my data, nor did I spend every waking hour in the field. In fact, at times all I could do in a week was organise one, or maybe two meetings, spending much of the rest of the time sitting on the sofa in my house, feeling unable to move. During the fieldwork year I told myself if I just kept my field journal and gathered my recordings at least I would have the evidence for this ethnography in the end. In a strange way, because I was forced to go part-time, because the process took me longer, I increased the length of this study and in a way the depth of this ethnography. I was also lucky enough to have done reflective listening training as part of volunteering work a few years before. During this project this training proved invaluable: not only did it help me encourage women to open up and talk during our meetings, but it helped me personally cope with the process of listening to their trauma. For me sitting, or walking,

with the women and listening to their accounts was one of the easiest parts of the ethnographic process. In those moments it was them that mattered; their trauma and their emotion. My role was to listen, and I knew how to do this without making it about me. In those moments my depression and my anxiety were secondary and my focus was on them as a person who deserved to be actively listen to and fully heard.

As this methodology has highlighted, ethnography does not start and end with the fieldwork; it is an ongoing process that extends beyond the fieldwork setting (Pink, 2013). Once out in the field, the researcher has to relive these events over and over again, listening to recordings, transcribing work, drawing out meaning, writing and editing pages and potentially talking over ideas in presentations or, as in this case, in a viva. For me personally, it was this phase of the ethnography, out of the field but still deeply engaged in the data and emotionally invested in my participants, that was the hardest. Sitting staring at my computer screen trying to transcribe, constantly reliving and rehearsing, my participants' words was traumatic. It was impossible for me to transcribe. I eventually managed to make a case to my funding body to outsource the transcription process. The two reasons they accepted this case was firstly that being dyslexic and using voice-to-text software made the process difficult and secondly that due to events that had happened outside the research but towards the end of my fieldwork period, I was suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

PTSD is caused by a stressful, frightening or distressing event(s) that someone experiences or witnesses, with symptoms including flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event(s) (NHS, 2017c). For me, it involved a worsening of my anxiety, flashbacks and nightmares as I relived past events over and over. While I would not say, in most cases at least, that research triggers PTSD, researchers in some fields do act as witnesses to people's trauma. Furthermore, in research that deals with emotional topics or/and traumatic events, the research process requires the researcher, the witness, to replay that event over and over again. As such, events extend beyond the timespace (May and Thrift, 2001) in which they occur, being retold in the research process, extending again to be re-experienced (often many times) by the researcher as they analyse the data and write up the work, eventually extending into the room of the reader of that work. Each time these events are also reinterpreted by those engaging with this work, people will add their own subjective understandings to them. An "experience, action, artefact, image or idea is never definitively just one thing

but may be redefined differently in different situations, by different individuals” (Pink, 2013; 23). The accounts will be read through people’s own life experiences and their own personal understandings, with the readings potentially also triggering past memories, including memories of other traumas, as it sometimes did for me.

In 2014 I was at a New and Emerging Feminist Geographers session at the Royal Geographical Society annual conference. It was here I realised quite how common it was for researchers, particularly those engaging with emotional and/or traumatic topics, to be struggling with their own mental wellbeing while doing research. Unsurprisingly for a feminist session, the theme of gender-based violence had run through many of the papers, so it was to this that the open discussion turned. Once one person had raised the challenges they personally faced looking after their own emotional wellbeing, others shared their stories; we talked about the effects of the research process and how we did (or did not) look after ourselves. This conversation both got me thinking about the topics in this section and caused me to realise how lucky I was. Unlike many of those present, my supervisors always made time to talk about my wellbeing in supervision and had helped me access the University counselling service. However, supervisors are not trained to provide this kind of support and while I had access to counselling through the University, this was limited to eight sessions – not enough to cover my fieldwork period, let alone the whole ethnographic process.

What these eight sessions (and the subsequent NHS counselling sessions I accessed for PTSD, after several months on a waiting list) allowed me to understand was the potential value such spaces can have in the research process. Counselling is a “talking therapy that allows a person to talk about their problems and feelings in a confidential and dependable environment” (NHS, 2017a; unpagged). It is a space that is designed to deconstruct feelings and reflect on events. It allows for a person to take some time to come to know themselves a little better, to reflect on their experiences and look at how the past affects the present, how different timespaces play out on the body. For me, knowing I had this time in the week to process my emotions allowed me to better understand my research. It not only provided me space to look after my own emotional wellbeing – practically speaking to help me get off the sofa and write this ethnography – it also allowed me to be more reflective and unpick some of the more emotive and emotional elements of the research. Furthermore, accessing counselling meant I could better utilise my supervisors’ time. Supervisions could become focused on what my supervisors are best able to

support me with - developing the academic ideas in this thesis. I would therefore argue that counselling can create more reflective research in which we better understand our positionality and are more enabled to cope the demands of the research process.

Looking after mental health and wellbeing is rarely considered as part of the research process; however, without good mental health, research can become impossible to conduct and people are more likely to cease doing it altogether (Podsakoff et al., 2007, Stubb et al., 2012, Levecque et al., 2017). When developing our curriculums as academics, it is then important not only to consider how to teach traumatic topics (see Carter, 2015) but to look at how we build our students' emotional resilience. This should include considering what skills they may need to help them cope with the research process, particularly when they may be engaging with emotional and/or traumatic topics (for some suggestions see Rager, 2005). Furthermore, it is worth considering the role counselling can play in the research process. In academia it tends to be seen as 'peripheral', with universities normally viewing it outside their core function. Funding rarely matches demand with services often being overstretched or services cut altogether (Gardiner, 2015, Campbell, 2017, Wakeford, 2017). However, as I have shown, it would be beneficial for counselling to be seen as a part of the research process, not only because we should care about the well-being of students and staff in universities but because it will make for better, more reflective, research. This will be research where we can know our own minds and better make sense of informants' words and actions as "an expression of our own consciousness" (Cohen and Rapport, 1995; 12, Pink, 2013).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the ethnographic approach taken to this research. It has shown that ethnography provides a useful way of exploring day-to-day life and can be particularly beneficial when working with people seeking asylum. Not only does it allow the research to track the movements of people as they live out their day-to-day lives but also to avoid, to some degree, the 'interview setting', and associated narratives, that those seeking asylum so often have to reproduce. Through an in-depth account of my fieldwork process I illustrated how I approached the 'field', how I engaged with participants, and the role that walking, talking and seeing played in this ethnography. As such this section provided some reflections on the fieldwork process. It particularly highlighted the importance of the way we approach research and the settings in which it

is conducted. Following on from this I introduced the women who gave their time to this study. In providing these biographies I carefully considered the level of detail trying to balance the need for context, the need to try and maintain anonymity and the women's differing comfort levels around what was shared.

Throughout these two sections, and indeed throughout the whole ethnographic process, I tried to follow the principle "first do no harm" (Mountz, 2011; 384). I tried to follow this principle when planning the research, when in 'the field', in how I left 'the field' and in what I did and did not include in this thesis - the ethnographic account. However, as the ethical reflections in this chapter have shown this was not always a simple process and fieldwork could be full of contradictions. As the chapter has illustrated, when conducting ethnography, particularly of the everyday, the researcher has to navigate relationships and intimate spaces of people's daily lives. They have to consider what 'harm' means and what would do 'least harm' to their participants. During this ethnographic process this inevitably required me making many little decisions; where and when to meet participants, what details to include in this thesis and whether or not to accept food.

As researchers, we rightly spend a lot of time thinking about how to do least harm to our participants, however, what we often overlook is the impact of the research on ourselves. In the final section of this methodology I started to address this by providing some reflections on how my mental health affected the research process and how the research process affected my mental health. In doing this I made the case that methods training should consider how we develop resilience and prepare people emotionally for research, particularly when they may be engaged with emotional and/or traumatic topics. I also argued that counselling could play an important role, in ensuring the wellbeing of the person conducting the research and helping the researcher better understand their positionality -That counselling may help produce more reflective work.

As this chapter has shown, utilising an ethnographic approach in this thesis allowed for an exploration of the conditions and temporality of daily life as my participants waited in and navigated the UK asylum's system. The ethnographic process provided space for me to be reflective on what I had seen, heard and experienced, to consider the ethical dilemmas of the research, what the women said and to draw links across their lives. I now turn to the empirical chapters where I use this understanding to consider the ways the policies and practices of the asylum system played out in and affected the women's daily lives.

Chapter 5: The Temporality of Waiting and Its Governmental Effects

At the beginning of every meeting, I would ask how participants were doing, and a typical response would be *'waiting'* or *'just waiting'*. Whilst further discussion may reveal that they had been up to a whole range of activities, waiting was the first thing that would spring to mind. Waiting has increasingly become a performative feature of modern everyday life (Lefebvre, 2002); nonetheless, the majority of people, the majority of the time, would not respond to general questions about what they have been doing simply or primarily as *'waiting'*. This chapter will draw from Bourdieu's ideas around time and temporality in *Pascalian Meditations* (2000) and a Foucauldian understanding of governmentality (1991) to explore the art of being made to wait in the asylum system.

In the first section, I consider the roles detainability, deportability and hope play in regulating those in the asylum system. In so doing, I extend the work of Coddington et al. (2012), who explore the 'bodily effects of policies enacted far from sites of power' to consider the bodily effects of policies of detention and deportation beyond the timespace of the detention centre. This allows me to also address Martin and Mitchelson's (2009) call for geographers to explore the effects of detention on the targeted community. In the second section, I address in more depth Bourdieu's (2000; 228) assertion that we need to 'catalogue, and analyse, all the behaviours associated with the exercise of power over other people's time'. As such, I consider in detail the temporality of waiting in the asylum system, drawing links between time and power, in so doing, I highlight some of waiting's governmental effects. Drawing on this understanding of temporality in the asylum system, in the final section I extend Auyero's (2010, 2011, 2012) work on waiting as a tactic of governmentality. I argue that the state's ability to shift people's temporal experience of waiting produces docile bodies (Foucault, 1977), subjects who not only comply with the state but who actively choose not to act in their own interests (Kennedy and Markula, 2011). As such, this chapter takes ideas of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) and gives them a temporal turn through drawing on Bourdieu's (2000) ideas of time, temporality and temporal power. Through doing this, it explores why people wait in the

asylum system, what the temporality of that waiting is, and how temporal power is exerted.

5.1 Precarious Temporality: The Roles of Detainability, Deportability and Hope in Producing Subjects that Wait

I did not set out to study detention; the detention process has been well documented elsewhere (see for instance Martin and Mitchelson, 2009, Gill, 2009a, Girma et al., 2015, Refugee Council, 2015b, Guild, 2016). Instead, my focus was the lived spaces between the formal governance processes of interviews, signing in and detention. However, it quickly became apparent that detention and the spaces of formal processes spread beyond their material borders and into other aspects of people seeking asylum's everyday lives. I therefore will look briefly at the unpredictability of detention before showing how it effects people beyond the timespace in which it occurs.

5.1.1 Control and Unpredictable Detention

The government's guidance on detention opens with the sentence "[t]he power to detain must be retained in the interests of maintaining effective immigration control" (Home Office, 2014a). According to the Home Office, detention is only ever meant to be used as a last resort where alternatives are not possible and is "**most** usually appropriate: **to effect removal**; initially to establish a person's identity or basis of claim; or where there is reason to believe that the person will fail to comply with any conditions attached to the grant of temporary admission or release" (Home Office, 2014a emphasis in original). However, detention does not always result in deportation and its frequent use suggests the process of detention may have wider regulatory effects.

As Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), the purpose of the prison was not to cause a person pain but to train them, to re-educate their 'spirit' and identify them as 'delinquent'. Through the routine of prison and the inability to know when one is being watched and the constant unequal gaze of the prison guard, it regulates prisoners, causing internalised discipline of individuals, making them less likely to break rules or laws. Furthermore, it isolates a small group who can be controlled, kept under surveillance, and thoroughly known (Foucault in Droit, 1975). While detention is a form of incarceration and as such still has a regulatory effect on those detained, people are not detained because they have committed a crime, instead they are detained simply for

being a non-citizen. Detention centres are part of the process of governmentality that police, reinforce and naturalise borders (Fassin, 2011, Conlon and Gill, 2013). This is in part because detention comes with the additional threat of deportation and associated fear. This is what De-Genova (2002; 439), in his study of undocumented migration, terms *deportability*. As he explains, “[m]igrant “illegality” is lived through a palpable sense of deportability, which is to say, the possibility of deportation, the possibility of being removed from the space of the nation-state”. While those seeking asylum are invoking the legal right to claim asylum, I will show that as non-citizens, tactics of deportability, and I would add *detainability*, still apply (De Genova, 2005, 2016). As with “[m]igrant “illegality” “some are [detained and] deported in order that most may remain”; as such it serves as a “disciplinary apprenticeship” in the production of subordinate subjects (De-Genova, 2002; 439 & 429).

Out of my eight participants, two had been detained and released prior to their engagement with this project and one was detained, and subsequently released, during the project. None of the women were at ‘flight risk’, with all three women being detained after initially complying with the asylum system’s requirements and all continuing to comply after their release. Indeed, as one explains, it was the point at which she initially sought asylum and began to comply with the Home Office that she was detained:

But I cannot stay in this country without no status, without not be legal you know, and the only solution I come to is to go and face them [the Home Office] and explain to them my problem, to tell them look this is my issue. When I go they just detained me, they detained me, they lock me up for three months.

(Barkisu)

The general social belief is that someone only goes to prison if they have committed a crime (see Martin and Mitchelson, 2009). However, as the Home Office statement makes clear, people seeking asylum can be detained regardless of whether they have committed a crime or not. Barkisu was not a ‘flight risk’, nor was she intending to break the law; she was not a ‘threat’, and she had made herself known to the authorities with the intention of complying with their procedures. Nonetheless, she was detained for three months. This can result in detention feeling illogical and unpredictable:

They lock you up, seeing the four walls, like a criminal. You know at least if you do a crime they will say, oh this person do a crime, they

should do ... like punish that person. But why, because you need help...that doesn't sound good to go and punish because you needed help, you come to them, you come and beg them to help you, you know? And they do that to you. It makes no sense. Does that sound good?

(Barkisu)

This unpredictability, the breaking of the link between criminal actions and detention causes someone to be aware of their detainability as, there is always the possibility of detention. It placed her in temporal uncertainty, a precarious temporality, as she had little, if any, certainty over the future (Bourdieu, 2000, Martin and Mitchelson, 2009)

All three of the participants who had been detained described this as one of the 'worst' parts of the asylum process. When detained someone is physically incarcerated, they are subject to strict rules and regulations and their movements, eating and sleeping patterns monitored and controlled. However, the impacts of detention move beyond the timespace (May and Thrift, 2001; 5) of the detention centre. The process of having been detained can affect people's mental and physical well-being. Furthermore, the unpredictability of detention and threat of deportation engenders fear that affects and can encourage subordination in those detained, and others, long after the detention has ended. It produces an awareness of someone's detainability. Let us consider the experience of Sara who was detained about two thirds of the way through the research and who I visited during and after her detention.

5.1.2 The Continued Embodiment of Detention

Sara and her seven-year-old son shared a two-bedroom house with another woman and her baby. Both the women in the house were on Section 4 support because they had children (see Chapter 2). Sara and her lawyer were also in constant contact with the Home Office about a fresh claim they had prepared after gathering new evidence about her case. She was asleep in the room with her son at 6 o'clock in the morning when she heard a noise at the door. In her words "*Someone was trying to open the door, because they don't knock on the door when they come to arrest you. Even if you aren't with clothes*". Sara explains:

I come in the window upstairs and I seen them you know and they said, "Immigration, open the door". And they were still knocking, if I was not opening the door they were knocking down the door you know. But I go, I open the door you know and I see five people from the front door, two policemen from the back door, my son was

sleeping, my friend was also there and it was so scary really. They take my phone away from me, they said you are not allowed to call nobody until we go to the place and then you can call. They said “you are under arrest” and me I was shocked, I said, you know, I couldn’t believe it, it was like I was a criminal.

She was surrounded by four people and could hear her son crying scared upstairs. She pleaded with them to let her go to her son. Only once they had secured all the windows and doors and checked who else was in the house was she allowed to go back into the room with her son. Then the immigration guards informed her:

in 20 minutes you need to leave, you need to pack everything you know. I couldn’t, I was oh my God, I didn’t know, I packed some things, they take me to the Home Office, I stay there, like and they did check to me everything you know. And after they said you need to go to London.

She and her five-year-old son were detained and due to be deported four days later (longer than the standard period a child can be held; see Chapter 2). I visited Sara on the afternoon of day three. She explained that from when she arrived in detention, she was taken immediately to the doctor and informed she needed a constant security presence due to the risk of self-harm. On the afternoon of my arrival, her lawyer was in court attempting to prevent her deportation and submit the new claim. While sitting with Sara waiting to hear some news, she explained to me *“all she does is smoke, she cannot look after her child, she cannot sleep because they are always watching her she cannot go to the loo without security watching her”* (field journal). Her son is being looked after by the Barnardo’s team within the detention centre (for discussion on the role of Barnardo’s see Tyler et al., 2014). After several pieces of misinformation from the immigration staff, Sara received the news that she was being released. As my field journal stated, *“she jumped back down the corridor... She went to embrace her son. ...She ran back over and said she would be going to a hotel tonight then back to Leeds tomorrow. I tried to ask what next but she didn’t know and for now was just happy she was not being deported tonight”*.

After the initial euphoria of her release, she became depressed and it was two months before she felt able to meet with me again. She explained that before returning to the house, the border agency staff took her son into the GP because he was sick; he had not eaten for the three days he was in detention. When eventually they did return to the

house he screamed and initially refused to enter the house and has since shown signs of post-traumatic stress. On her return, she discovered that the other woman with whom she had shared the house with had taken her baby and disappeared. Sara explains the other woman *“ran away... She maybe thought [they are] going to arrest me too: is difficult because you know that you can't do nothing. She scared”*.

On Sara's first night out of detention she had a friend stay; she was very scared and every time she heard a car or noise she thought they were coming to get her again and this remained with her. The distress also took a physical toll on her body; she was often tired, alternating between feelings of restlessness and lethargy. Furthermore, as she explains, her body reacted physically to the stress:

It was not a rash, it was, like big spots, it became like black, someone bit me, after the skin was coming off, it was like you know when you cut something and you leave it for too much days and it became black you know, exactly all body. All my body, I was scared. I was shocked. I was very shocked and scared you know the doctor said I can't help you, I can't give you nothing, you just need to relax. It's all because of the stress he said, it's all because you know what you're going through. He said you are lucky your hair doesn't fall off.

It took Sara another two months before she started doing anything social. She sought medical help and was on antidepressants. She just took her son to school, saw her doctor, her lawyer and went to sign-in spending the rest of the time in the house. She explains *“even when I come back to Leeds ... I was feeling without power, I didn't have power, I couldn't eat, I wasn't eating, I was too sick”*. She found it difficult to comprehend the logic of what had happened to her; in detention, she *“didn't have any more hope”* and now two months later, in her own words *“I'm really, really scared.... I never know, if they refuse me again how I'm going to do after, ... I hope it will not happen again. I hope”*.

By my final meeting with Sara, four months after her detention, the initial shock had subsided; however, she still struggled with the logic of her detention and expressed a combination of fear that it would happen again and hope that it would not happen. These feelings were also reflected in the conversations I had with Barkisu and Nadia, who had both been detained over a year before I met them. The illogicalness of being locked up *“like a criminal... because you need help”* (Nadia) made their future engagement with the

asylum system “*more scary*” as they never knew if and when it might happen again; however, despite living with this fear, they continued to comply with the process.

As with Raven-Ellison’s (2015; 25) study of people’s experiences of home after detention, we can see that detention extends beyond its borders into people’s home spaces (also see Chapter 6). As Raven-Ellison (2015; 25) notes, detention has a unique, “temporal and spatial indeterminacy which permeates the past, present and future experiences of detainees”; however, while noting this infuses lives with precariousness, she does not look further into this temporality. I would then extend her work to argue that the way detention is experienced beyond the timespace in which it occurs infuses life with a precarious temporality. The memory of past detention, and the awareness that one could be detained again, creates a sense of temporal uncertainty and can affect a person’s temporality, the way time is experienced, long after detention occurred.

Drawing from geographical feminist scholarship (for instance Mayer, 2004, Mountz, 2004, Garmany, 2009), Coddington et al. (2012) explains that embodiment “provide[s] a counterpoint to the seemingly disembodied depictions of migration enforcement”. It allows exploration to move away from disembodied processes towards the bodily experiences of everyday life at which the processes are lived. As can be seen from Sara, while in detention, she was constantly monitored due to fear that she would self-harm and both her and her son did not eat. There was an embodiment of this detention. In Coddington et al.’s (2012) study of island detention practices, they also found similar embodiments, with people using antidepressants or sleep medications, changes in choice of activity and even acts of self-harm and suicide occurring. They argue that through these acts, the process of detention becomes written on the bodies of those seeking asylum and as such you can see the “bodily effects of policies enacted far from sites of power” (Coddington et al., 2012; 30). Sara’s account extends this by highlighting how the acts continue to be written on the body after the event has occurred and that policy continues to have an embodied effect beyond the timespaces in which they are enacted in. Her and her son needed medical support after detention. She took antidepressants and her body had a physical reaction to the stress of the situation; her skin was coming off, scarring her body. Furthermore, due to the shock and subsequent depression her behaviour changed. She was fatigued, became depressed and stopped going out and interacting with friends and support groups that she normally relied on (see Chapter 8 for more on the

importance of friendships and support groups). She embodied the asylum process mentally and by extension, physically through the way she interacted with people and the spaces she inhabited (Vitus, 2010). Detention made her more passive after release as initially she did little beyond simple daily tasks and in the longer run it increased her fear improving her compliance with, and subordination to, the asylum process.

Through exploring what happened to Sara, during but also after detention, I have started to address Martin and Mitchelson's (2009) observation that research needs to explore the effects of detention beyond the detention centre, to see how it becomes embedded in everyday life. However, they also identify a need to extend research beyond the experiences of those detained to explore how targeted communities understand and react to detention. To begin to address this, I now turn to look at the effect the threat of detention, and potential deportation, had on those who were not detained.

5.1.3 The Wider Effects of Detention; Hope, Fear and Detainability

Sara was afraid, but she still had hope. Hope that she would not be detained again and hope she would get leave to remain. In her own words, she was *"very scared but I hope it will not happen again. I hope"*. In contrast to Sara's continued engagement with the asylum process, the other woman in her house lost hope she would ever gain asylum. This woman saw only the threat of detention and deportation and so felt she had nothing to lose in her disengagement with the asylum process. As such, the tactics of being made to wait and detention failed as, in seeing Sara detained and knowing her own vulnerable position as someone on Section 4, it destroyed her hope and she disengaged. However, disengaging with the asylum process removes almost any chance of receiving asylum and therefore places someone in a situation where they are constantly detainable and deportable, with almost no chance of this status ending (De-Genova, 2002, 2016, Gill, 2009b). As such, it only occurs when someone has lost all hope of asylum and so the risk of remaining engaged in the asylum process, remaining in view of the authorities, is perceived as greater than disengaging. The key difference between Sara above and the other woman in her house is that Sara, while very scared, maintained hope.

As Bourdieu (2000) explains "[m]aking people wait ... delaying without destroying hope ... adjourning without totally disappointing" are parts of the workings of domination. However, when the "circle between chances and expectations" is broken, people may no longer be willing to wait, as they no longer believe there is anything to wait for (Bourdieu,

2000). Someone's hope that they may get the outcome they want is central to their willingness to accept 'the rules of the game'; to comply with the asylum system. The tactic being used here is one of a stick and carrot: the stick is the constant threat of detention and deportation that keeps someone following the rules, while the carrot is the hope of an in-sight (if not in reach) asylum status. While some people may lose hope on seeing someone detained, others do not and so continue to compliantly wait. At first glance, it may seem the threat of detention and deportation have little effect on this group; however, as I will show, the temporal uncertainty that this engenders affects people's day-to-day lives and increases their fear, in turn increasing their compliance; it therefore helps to regulate this wider population.

After Sara returned to Leeds, she continued to share a room with her son despite having the two-bedroom house to herself. She did this because she was afraid that if the Home Office came for her again in the morning she would be separated from her son. She was not the only participant who shared a room with her child despite having the option not to. Hiruni, who had never been detained, had a two-bedroom house; however, she also shared a room with her child:

It's not safe but [it is] unstable knowing that anything could happen, because I've seen it [detention] happen to other people. It could happen tomorrow, it could happen in a week's time, I don't know, but every night, I think it's the night when you're about to sleep you think about all this, like I don't know how long or...I keep thinking of separating our bedrooms, me and [my son], but every time I hear of story where they walk in in the middle of the morning and rush you out I'd rather have [my son] with me in the room.

Hiruni shares a room with her son despite knowing that at 14 he would ideally sleep in a room on his own. The detention of other people has an effect on the way she lives her life, her family relations and the geography of her home. It is not simply the fact that others have been detained that affects her behaviour but, she explains, the feeling that "anything could happen" at any time that leaves her feeling unsafe and unstable, the precarious temporality. This was reflected in many of my other interactions with people seeking asylum; they were "worried", "scared" and "unsure" as to what might happen to them and when.

As Martin and Mitchelson (2009, 472) point out “[i]f detention is characterized by its temporal uncertainty, *the spectre of being detained* may produce its own sense of indeterminacy”. Here we can see that detention not only produces a sense of indeterminacy but the awareness of others’ detention and the constant threat of their own, produces temporal uncertainty in the wider asylum-seeking population. This is detainability as, like deportability, it is not the act of being detained but rather the awareness that one could be detained at any time that affects experiences and actions (De-Genova, 2002, 2005, 2016). Furthermore, detention comes with the threat of deportation; as such detainability is linked and enacts deportability, as it forms a constant reminder that deportation is possible without the need to actually deport people. People do not know when, or if, they will be detained or deported or what the logic of that may be. This engenders a constant fear and sense of unknowing, a precarious temporality. However, equally important in maintaining people engaged in the asylum system is “*hope*” that they will eventually gain asylum, as it is hope that makes people willing to submit to temporal power (Bourdieu, 2000). It is hope that causes people to accept, or at least continue within, this temporal uncertainty, this precarious temporality. Let us now briefly consider the role that fear and threat of detention and the uncertainty as to when or if this will happen has on producing compliant, self-regulating, subjects.

5.1.4 Tactics that Make People Willing to Wait

I was visiting Krishma during her family’s preparations for Eid. Her daughter and several friends were present. While making clothes for the festivities the conversation turned to fasting. We talked about the way fasting in the UK was quite different to Pakistan; the long summer days in the UK could result in fasting for up to 18 hours. All the women were currently in the asylum system and needed to regularly sign in at the Home Office (Bolt, 2017). I asked the women if they found it difficult to get to the Home Office while fasting and whether the Home Office did anything to make it easier.

Noor translated for her mother, Krishma, stating that “*she just doesn't say anything to them because she feels like they might do something with the case so she doesn't say anything to them*”. Going on to explain that her mother will have to sign in on Eid. Noor explained:

I was thinking I tell them, ring them and tell them it's a festival so they might give her [Krishma] the day off. But she [Krishma] said no, it's fine I just go. I was going to ring them but she said no it's fine, I'll

do it go, go in the morning and do it. [Krishma didn't want to] cause any stress [with the Home Office] or any problems for her case.

I then asked how they got to the Home Office to sign in. They lived just within the three-mile radius in which the Home Office does not pay for travel, so despite the actual distance of the round-trip being well over three miles (over two hours walking) they did not get reimbursed for the bus fare. Noor explained that sometimes she walks but that her mother cannot walk due to her poor health and so they always find the money for her to go by bus, even though the expense of a bus ticket (approximately £4) was a lot out of the family's weekly budget.

The women then discussed signing in further in Pakistani, Noor translating explaining; *"they will always go for signing in, and she [one of the friends] is saying 'they will never miss signing in day go on time no matter what'".*

There are no immigration officers or detention security staff forcing Krishma, Noor and their friends to comply with the asylum system. Rather the women comply because they fear *"they might"* detain them; they are worried that their case will be refused and they will be deported or detained if they do not comply and therefore they don't want to *"cause problems"*. Here, we can see the workings of governmentality in practice. Sokhi-Bulley (2014; unpagged) explains while the game, or art, of government draws on discipline, its focus is populations. Like discipline, governmentality remains focused on the mundane, on *"meticulous, often minute techniques"* (Foucault, 1977) as it is these that control the behaviour of a collective; as such it is tactics and not policies and laws in their own right that are important.

It may be a requirement for the women to sign in, but there is no reason they cannot ask to reschedule an appointment for religious reasons and why the day may not be changeable; Home Office managers can be flexible on timings (Bolt, 2017, Home Office, 2017). The women may have been allowed to ask to reschedule an appointment due to a religious holiday; however, fear prevents them from exploring this option. It is not the law and formal policies alone that disciplines the women but rather the fear that comes from direct or indirect experiences of detention and the threat of deportation. Here we can see that *"[i]mmigration laws serve as instruments to supply and refine the parameters of both discipline and coercion, but this is largely so through the deployment of those laws as tactics"* (De-Genova, 2002; 425).

Furthermore, the women will undergo hardship, either through walking the two-hour round trip despite fasting or through using some of their weekly budget (an amount that barely covers the essentials needed to live; see Chapter 7) in order to pay for the bus fare. The fear of detention and risks of deportation, coupled with a hope of gaining asylum, causes the women to self-regulate even when this could result in discomfort or physical harm. While detention may regulate the body of an individual, the tactic of detention regulates the behaviour of the larger population of people who are seeking asylum. The constant fear and threat of detention (and by extension deportation), the uncertainty of when or if a person will be detained rather than detention itself, becomes a tactic that has governmental effects as people change their behavior, self-regulate, and comply. The fear of being detained and deported was most commonly expressed in relation to the need to 'sign in' at the Home Office. However, the effects of the fear extended beyond people's interactions with the Home Office and immigration services into other interactions and relationships. This is perhaps unsurprising, as governmentality is not only about relationships concerned with the exerting of political sovereignty but about shaping, guiding or affecting a person's conditions in a range of relationships and situations (Gordon, 1991).

As I have already demonstrated, the fear of being detained changed people's behaviour, for instance where the women choose to share rooms with their children or attend appointments regardless of the situation. However, perhaps the most extreme example of self-regulating occurred when Sara was physically attacked by a woman after her five-year-old son accidentally kicked a football into the road. The woman called her son "a bastard", at which Sara got angry and asked her to come and apologise to her son for calling him that:

Sara: I said if my son did this you come in here nicely and say to me, you know something your son did this and I'm going to say to him, you sorry, I said. But you can't call my son bastard I said. She not even say sorry and then became very angry and she's beating me but I know, I'm asylum I can't beat nobody. ..., you know and she was beating me and even I couldn't protect myself you know, to push her back. I didn't push her back..., she was beating me, beating me... I was scared...I didn't fight, even something small, you know...

Emma: Were you scared if you did anything it will affect you?

Sara: Yes, if I do nothing you know they send you back straight away, they say they don't believe you, you know and that's why I

didn't even push her, I didn't do nothing, even to protect myself you know, when she was beating.

This incident happened prior to her detention. Nevertheless, fear that came with her detainability and deportability and her desire to gain asylum resulted in her regulating her behaviour to such an extreme that she was unwilling to defend herself.

The laws, policy and practice of the asylum system creates a situation where people live with temporal uncertainty, a precarious temporality, constantly aware of their detainability and deportability. As such, detainability and deportability become tactics of governmentality that extend beyond the time-space of the detention centre and into people seeking asylum's everyday lives. This, coupled with hope that asylum will eventually be granted, produces subjects that wait, subordinate to the state's temporal power (Bourdieu, 2000). It affects the way they interact with space and people; it affects who they see, how they use their home, how they interact and react to others, their mental and physical health. As a tactic, the uncertainty created through the constant threat of detention and deportation produces self-regulating subjects compliant with the Home Office's wishes and willing to experience discomfort or even harm. In effect, people accept and comply with the conditions of their waiting; they are willing to wait.

5.2 Cataloguing and Analysing the Times and Temporalities of Waiting

Temporal uncertainty around when or if someone may be detained or deported, coupled with the hope that they will receive their asylum status, may place people in a precarious temporality and cause people to regulate their behaviour, producing subjects that are willing to wait. However, as Bourdieu (2000, 228) explains, temporal power needs to be "catalogued, and analysed" if its power, the power to make someone wait, is to be fully understood. In this section, I consider this precarious temporality in detail, drawing links between time and power and thus developing our understanding of waiting in the UK asylum system.

As there is no single definition of time (see Chapter 3) I use this to my advantage in this section to explore time in, or of, the asylum system in a variety of ways. However, I always return to the view of practice as temporalization; that is, what makes 'time' in a human sense is our experience of it (Bourdieu, 2000; 214, also see Chapter 3). I firstly explore how much time the asylum system takes, showing how the process can keep people

waiting indefinitely. Secondly, I consider this period in terms of the life course, showing how people end up with their lives suspended, living in purposeless and meaningless dead time. Thirdly, I look at the rhythms and routines of daily life, illustrating how waiting for news can have governmental effects, impacting on daily life. Finally, I look at the ways people experience time - how they are moved between boredom and rushing, dead time and moments of 'crisis', showing that through this, time is made visible and experienced as temporal power. While the sections build on each other they also each look at the precarious temporality of the asylum system from a different angle and so read together, they help to catalogue and analyse the condition(s) of waiting.

5.2.1 Indefinite Time of Waiting

If the process of waiting within the asylum system is to be understood as a tactic in its own right, it is first important to understand how long this waiting is for, 'how much time it might take' – that is, how its clock time in hours, days, months and years might look (and be experienced). The Home Office aims to complete all asylum cases within six months (Home Office, 2015d). However, the reality is almost half of asylum applications take more than six months for the initial decision and there is currently a backlog in asylum applications (Refugee Council, 2015a, Home Office, 2015g). Furthermore, the process of appealing is not unusual. At the time of my study approximately 75% of all people seeking asylum who were not granted asylum during the initial application entered an appeals process (Refugee Council, 2014). This process is rarely simple and can cause people to remain in the asylum process for years. During this time, they are in limbo, constantly having to engage in complicated bureaucratic processes and often waiting months before hearing anything about their case. As such, people seeking asylum can be kept waiting almost indefinitely.

As Rashmi explains below, even when someone receives information about their case, this often does not mark the end of the process.

***Rashmi:** ... the way they make decisions is unfair because sometimes we have given everything we have but they are doing no... They say this wrong or that thing wrong, the things they are saying don't make sense to be fair. It's very not relevant because in our case they say we haven't applied as we came to England but we had the problems after we came here, so it's totally rubbish that he's having them here.*

Emma: Yes, okay, so you think they kind of look for reasons to not give it in a way?

Rashmi: Yes.... If they give the documents they will give back other reasons like errors in the documents like translating not quality, like the papers we have are poor English but we are not using our country as the first language, so from getting here in our country and lawyers sometimes...some lawyers are really good at writing good English, but we can't afford them, they're really expensive so we are going for a low price. So when they type the typist is maybe doesn't know, so it's not our fault.

When I first met Rashmi, she had already entered several appeals and was taking her appeal to the Upper Tribunal. This continued throughout our meetings as she waited first to be seen by the tribunal and then to hear the outcome of their decision (see Chapter 2 for information on the asylum process). As Rashmi explains, it felt as though cases could be dismissed for unjustifiable reasons. This approach causes what Shaw and Kaye (2013; 5) term the “domino effect” where one part of the case that is seen as “inconsistent or implausible” is used as “the basis for undermining other aspects of the individual’s account”, keeping the person held in the asylum system as they appeal against these decisions.

Due to the nature of the refusals, they often do not mark the end of the case but merely a delay, an adjournment, as people seeking asylum appeal or gather fresh evidence to address the issues and concerns of the Home Office. Those seeking asylum have to continue to wait ‘turned down’ without being ‘turned off’ (Bourdieu, 2000) and are kept waiting indefinitely. As Schwartz (1975) has explained, “[p]unitive sanctioning through the imposition of waiting is met in its most extreme forms when a person is not only kept waiting but is also kept ignorant as to how long he [sic] must wait” (Schwartz, 1975 in Auyero 2010, 858, also see Comfort, 2009).

During the nine months of study, only one of my participants, Grace, left the asylum process. Of the remainder, the average time in the asylum process was already approximately 2 years and 7 months, with none of the women knowing when the process would eventually end. Sara sums up these feelings of uncertainty and indeterminacy stating:

I don't know for how long I will wait. I don't know for what I'm waiting for.

5.2.2 Disruption to the Life Course

While people are held within the asylum process, the link between life expectations and chances of achieving them is broken. People seeking asylum have no right to work, cannot choose where they live and have limited access to education. This, coupled with the indefinite period of waiting, made planning for the future or moving forward with life almost impossible. Held in policy imposed liminality people in the asylum system are prevented from moving forward through their expected life course (Hynes, 2011, also see Chapter 3). Under these conditions, the present can become static without a sense of movement. This can result in frustration, as Sara explains:

in the day what I do in the day you know, but even for my future I cannot do something, if now I had my stay here, now I was waiting two years, this is the third year I'm in situation and two years of my life is just going, I don't do nothing without, now I go just to college, I'd love to go to university ... I cannot go [cannot get funding] ..., two years are already gone. And nobody cares if you're like, if I am being crazy staying all the time in the home.

Furthermore, on another occasion, Sara explained that her inability to have control over her life caused her to feel like she was “in jail”:

£96 for two of us, for the shopping, for the things, they don't even let us work, nobody has any money. They don't let us do nothing in our life, it's like you are in jail. Yes, in jail but in the house, but it still is like in the jail, because you want to do things, you can't do it. And even in this age and years going, and the life is going too, the days, if you're waiting, waiting, waiting and always have to bring you depression, they bring you stress, you don't go out so much, after you still take tablets and from tablets you became more and more and it starts like this.

The boundary between home and prison becomes eroded as the waiting process infiltrates people's lives (Comfort, 2009). This affects people's self-esteem and sense of self. The majority of my participants experienced depression, restlessness, despair and fatigue at some point during our meetings. One participant admitted to self-medicating with alcohol while several others informed me they were on antidepressants. As Bourdieu (2000) explains, when discussing the impoverished poor, people who have

endless amounts of free time and little ability to create a cohesive vision of the future engage in meaningless activities; they may attend college when there is no prospect of a job or endanger the body, self-harm or drink, simply to make something happen rather than nothing, to experience temporality. Bourdieu (2000) describes this as *dead time*, purposeless and meaningless.

Hynes (2011; 31) explains that during this period, people find themselves “outside mainstream society”, actively excluded from expected living patterns and denied the ability to “restore normal routines”, including ‘normal’ gender roles. Disproportionally, women seeking asylum are in the UK with children, either as a single parent, often fleeing gender-based persecution, or as part of a couple (see Chapter 2). While I do not believe women should be reduced to their position as ‘mother’, it is useful, when looking at the life course, to reflect on the impact being a parent and having children may have. As Vitus (2010; 27, also see Uprichard, 2008) explains “[c]hildhood is a process of both ‘being and becoming’ embedded in time and temporality” and thus looking at the mothers in my study’s experiences is useful when exploring temporality in the asylum system.

Three of my participants had children with them in the UK, one had left children in the country of origin, and one had children both here in the UK and in the country of origin. For the mothers in my study, the biological changes of children, the movement from one school year to the other, or the missed birthdays became a way of acknowledging and measuring the passing of time within this liminal period. When the women were asked if they felt that having children in the UK affected their experiences of the asylum process, they agreed that having children in the UK was a positive thing. Children meant that women were never alone and provided a way of giving purpose to the mothers. Vitus (2010; 39) explains “[i]n open-ended waiting even though the present becomes overwhelmingly the dominant point of reference, the present has no existential value”. The children gave a sense of purpose and value to the present and a way of marking its temporality. However, as the quotes from Sara, who had her son with her in the UK, shows, people still could not move beyond the present as they could not plan for the future. While the children provided a way of measuring time and perhaps giving value to time, it still could only be lived in a present with little existential value. Furthermore, even the childhood process of ‘being and becoming’ (Uprichard, 2008) became disrupted for the children and mothers within my study.

I have already talked about the way the mothers may share rooms with their children even after the age the mothers feel it is appropriate. Children's education also often becomes disrupted as families are moved. Families may find themselves moving several times during the asylum process; they may move from an initial hostel, to another city, and again if they enter Section 4 (see Chapter 6). Disruption to education was common across all my participants with school-aged children, as Rashmi explains:

This is her third school so when we came to London she had to wait around two or three months for a school. And then she got a school and then she went to the secondary school but after that we came here, and she had to wait another month or two months so she has no time to learn straightaway.

In Grace's words, "as the children were not enrolled in school there was ample time and there was little for them to do". Children being out of education was not only a disruption to their education, it also affected theirs and their mothers' expected life course and the temporality of the home - it changed the rhythms and routines of daily life. The family dynamics changed as they had to navigate this purposeless and meaningless dead time (Bourdieu, 2000). While biological or astronomical time continues to move forward, 'human time', that is time we make acting as agents, "of practice as 'temporalization'", did not move in line with these other forms of temporality (Bourdieu, 2000; 207).

As I will explore in Chapter 8, this passing of time may open up possibilities even as it creates frustration and therefore is perhaps not dead time in the fullest sense. Nonetheless, the asylum process causes people to wait indefinitely, the life course on hold, and with limited ability to prepare for the future in a 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1995) state of being. The temporality of the asylum system is one where "expectations and the world which is there to fulfil them is broken" (Bourdieu, 2000; 208), where time becomes dead time experienced in a present with little existential value.

If the effects of waiting in people seeking asylum's lives is to be fully catalogued and its power understood, the way time is experienced in the 'present', the everyday, ordinary and mundane elements of waiting, must be explored. While the present may have little existential value (Vitus, 2010) and while this may be dead time (Bourdieu, 2000), it is nonetheless people's embodied experience of time, their day-to-day lived realities.

5.2.3 Rhythms and Routines of Daily Life: Waiting for News

Beyond signing in at the Home Office there are few other formal meetings required of people seeking asylum, people may occasionally be asked to come for additional interviews, need to attend appointments with the lawyer or a court hearing. In the remainder of the time people wait to hear news on their case.

Emma: *Been up to anything?*

Nadia: *No I am still waiting.*

Emma: *You're just waiting.*

Nadia: *Yes, they [the Home Office] don't say anything yet.*

The majority of the time, the Home Office communicates with people in the asylum system via post. As such, the arrival and passing, of the postal worker acquires a particular significance, affecting the rhythms and routines of daily life.

Emma: *Is there anything going on?*

Rashmi: *Everything is normal these days, yes, just watching for the, looking for the, postman; it feels good when he walks away from here. That's all for now, we know he will be around 10 o'clock, so we are sitting here and looking through the window, when he goes past this way it's okay, it's better. And again he comes back in the evening, and Saturday is a little bit more stressful because a lot of letters we receive on Saturdays, I think they're posted every Friday, so normally we got the letters on Saturday morning. So when it is Saturday afternoon it feels better or Sunday is okay.*

Emma: *[...] when you see a letter how does that make you feel?*

Rashmi: *Not feel good because even [if] we were out and when we came back we feel like someone hides in here, we open the door slowly to look what's on the floor. If there's a brown coloured one it fills like with stress.*

Emma: *Are they always in brown envelopes?*

Rashmi: *Yes normally it comes in brown [...]*

Emma: *Your husband just drops the kid off at school and then you come here and you wait for the post and then you get on with the day, is that right?*

Rashmi: Yes, we now wait for the post.

As Rashmi and her husband wait to hear news, they structure their days and weeks around the rhythms of the post. Her husband drops the children at school and they wait for the post. If for any reason they have been out, the first thing they do on returning is look at the doormat.

Darling (2014; 487) highlights the governmental effects letters can have on the lives of people seeking asylum, as they “mediate and communicate the decisions and policies of the UKBA as an arm of the UK government”. However, here we see it is not only the letter that can have governmental effects but also the unrealised potential of a letter, the process of waiting for the letter to arrive. As Darling (2014; 489) cautions, while the “governmental intentions” should not be overstated as “governmental effects” and may simply be a by-product of bureaucratic processes, the effects are nonetheless important. The letter yet to come becomes an “affectively loaded phenomena” (Navaro-Yashin, 2007; 81), something “onto which individuals project meanings, aspirations, and attachments” (Darling, 2014; 491). Waiting for this has an impact on the temporality of their daily lives; a temporal ‘politics of discomfort’ (Darling, 2011a) is produced. The timespace of the house is infiltrated and the rhythms of the post affects how they feel when they open the front door and the level of stress experienced while in the house. Anxiety is felt as the postman is seen and relief is felt when he passes, or on Sundays when there is no post. Even after the arrival of a letter, its potential may not yet be realised and the waiting period, with all its anxiety, may continue.

English is not most people in the asylum system’s first language; however, as almost all the letters are written in English, many people need support to read them. As Noor, Krishma’s daughter explained:

When letters come, she [Krishma] doesn’t look either, so she just sits there and looks at the letters, like stares at them what they [the English words] are, just trying to figure out like if she can figure it out. She gets scared and maybe like she does get scared if it’s the refusal or something.

For those like Krishma, with family members who speak English, these feelings may only last a few hours but for others it can mean this period of discomfort can continue for days, while they wait to attend a group, support organisation or to speak to someone with good English. Indeed, on more than one occasion I was asked to read letters for participants. This highlighted to me the reality that, if they want to realise the potential

of a letter and end their waiting period (and indeed respond within the required ten days (Darling, 2014)), they had to share the contents of private letters with others.

With the difficulties accessing ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), and other English language courses (see Daniel et al., 2010, Doyle and O'Toole, 2013) and the increased likelihood that women will not have accessed education, including English-language education, before entering the UK, women are disproportionately more likely to need letters read (Chapter 8, Daniel et al., 2010, Doyle and O'Toole, 2013). Furthermore, for some of the women in my study, the need to have letters read by others also resulted in them needing to enter spaces that they otherwise would not choose to. Several of the women in my study told me they do not like going to male dominated drop-ins, but when they received post they had to, as it was the only way they could have the letters read and gain the support they needed for their case (Chapter 8). As such, this temporal 'politics of discomfort' (Darling, 2011a) may be felt disproportionately by women.

Whether by design or not, waiting for letters, first to arrive and then to be read, has governmental effects, causing people to base their movements around the movements of the post. A temporal 'politics of discomfort' (Darling, 2011a) is produced with the timespace of the house and wider rhythms and routines of daily life impacted.

5.2.4 Experiencing Time

In the lives of people who are seeking asylum, the ability of others to dictate the terms of their waiting and as such the breaking of the link between "expectations and chances, *illusion* and *lusiones*, expectations and the world which is there to fulfil them" causes time (or at least what we call time) to be experienced (Bourdieu, 2000; 208). While in the asylum system there are rhythms and routines to daily life, these are not what a person expected and, in large part, they are not within someone's control. As such, time becomes visible, it is experienced not as something external that 'happens to us' but something socially constructed. As Vitus (2010; 33) puts it "[w]hile under normal circumstances time is phenomenologically and existentially implicit, when it is 'problematic' it seems to become visible". Here, I will show how people experience this time, how they are flung between *dead time* and moments of *crisis* and how this makes time and temporal power visible.

In Vitus' (2010) discussion of children in Danish asylum centres, he highlights how seemingly endless waiting resulted in boredom. He draws from Heidegger (1996) to explain that this is not superficial boredom that can be cured by amusement, but rather existential boredom. That is, "bored by something, so that otherwise entertaining and engaging activities [leave] us empty and unsatisfied. Existential boredom springs from an obstruction of the temporality of being as such, of being caught in time" (Vitus, 2010; 34). Going on to look at reactions to boredom, he identifies that it is expressed and experienced in three ways: through *restlessness*, *fatigue* and *despair*. These three manifestations of boredom were also experienced by the women in my study, with them moving between them, or experiencing them simultaneously. Let us take Hiruni as an example.

When I first met Hiruni she was always involved in activities; she volunteered at at least three organisations, attended college courses and always seemed to be helping out on a new project. Reflecting on this, she explained:

I did so many different [activities]. I mean when I think about the number of places I used to go to and I felt I kept myself busy just to go on, to keep on going without stopping. It stopped me having to think, after a year and a half it took a toll on my body and I felt, in the back of your mind you always know that you're not really settled, you know you it's going to happen, it's always there. But you keep going even though that, it's like a force that pulls you down and then you're trying to go against that force, I'm like, I know I'm stressed out from the inside out. I notice that to stay still it's hard, even through the nights, so I just felt exhausted but I kept on going.

Hiruni "noticed staying still was hard" and also "felt exhausted", nonetheless she was compelled to "keep on going". However, sometimes she did stop, and when she did, she often found it hard to motivate herself to get out of bed, sleeping for long periods, cancelling activities and rarely leaving the house. Explaining, in her words:

I'm just feeling exhausted, I don't know how to explain the physical exhaustion ... the last couple of weeks I've been just tired.

These two extremes of behaviour – keeping busy or doing nothing – were common amongst my participants. They regularly moved between restlessness and fatigue. Furthermore, as Hiruni explained, she could at times find everything too much and would simply not know what to do; she had a sense of despair. As she put it:

[L]iving for so long like this it's crazy, it puts you in a mental state.

This sense of despair was felt by all of my participants, with the majority needing counselling and medical assistance to help them cope with the situation.

We can see, then, that the boredom brought about by the seemingly endless waiting, does not only produce restlessness, fatigue and despair in children in Danish asylum centres but is a wider phenomenon. However, boredom only occurs in dead time, as boredom stems from a need to fill empty time, that is time that is purposeless and meaningless (Vitus, 2010, also see Heidegger, 1996). Waiting, by contrast, is not static; rather, “moments of ‘emergency’ or ‘crisis’ unpredictably interrupt people’s experiences of empty successive time such that waiting communities lurch between acute ‘crises’ and long periods of ‘dead time’” (Vitus, 2010; 956, also see Bourdieu, 2000)

Most of the time the women were situated in empty time, waiting for something to happen; when something did happen, for example if an appointment suddenly changed or someone heard news on their case, they could be flung into a moment of ‘crisis’. This crisis was not an end to the waiting, as they were still in the indefinite time of waiting in the asylum system; rather it is a different experience of the temporality of waiting. For instance, I visited Krishma and Noor two weeks after they had received her refusal. Noor explains:

[I]t's hard, because I was going to the schools and the GPs and everywhere to get letters and stuff for the fresh evidence so it is really hard. To make like, to get everything in like a week. Because our solicitor like says, tells everything we need to get and it is like do in a week so it's really hard and it's really hard to arrange.

I had initially been meeting them the week before. Despite always keeping all our other appointments, on this occasion Noor apologetically had to reschedule because, in her words, “*she’s in such a rush*”. The sense of rushing is not the same as the experience of restlessness, as she is not experiencing dead time; rather, she is briefly jolted out of the boredom as she feels there is something meaningful, or perhaps more accurately necessary, that she must do.

These moments of crisis were not uncommon, and I found the Home Office regularly changed appointment times. They would normally occur through a letter but could sometimes happen with little warning through phone calls. As the experience of Sara

shows, this could often seem relatively arbitrary and rarely took into account the needs of individuals.

I was due to meet with Sara but she cancelled last minute because she had been asked to attend an interview. As my field journal noted “*She was in a rush she had to find childcare for her son before attending the Home Office*”. When I next visited Sara I discussed this last-minute change with her:

Emma: Do you still have to go to the Home Office to sign in?

Sara: Yes I was going every two months, to go there for signing and now I was there last week, there for signing again and they send me letter to go every six months now.

Emma: Do you know why it's gone down, is there a reason?

Sara: No I think they just make too many people to go now because I think it's too many people and they make it like this to go every six months. You never know maybe next month you have a letter and they say you come every week and sign, they make you like this, stressed all the time you know. It's very difficult.

Emma: And you had to cancel our last meeting [due to the Home Office] ... just phone you one day and go oh today?

Sara: Yes and call for signing, you need to come here and I go there, I sign and I go. After today they sent me letter and said you need to come every six months. Because last time when I was there, last two months. You never know, never know what they're going to bring each month.

The receiving of a letter with news on a case, or a last-minute call to change an appointment time “takes time, it speaks of a governmental position which directs the time of others and imposes a temporal rhythm onto the experience of seeking asylum” (Darling, 2014; 488). While as Vitus (2010) observed, people waiting in the asylum process experience time as boredom expressed through restlessness, fatigue and despair, here we can see it is also experienced as *rushing*, as action can suddenly be needed. What is more, this act of being flung between dead time and crisis causes time to be made visible and experienced as temporal power. As I have shown, the exercise of power over other people can be exerted temporarily “by adjourning, deferring, delaying, rising false hope, or, conversely, rushing, taking by surprise”, it places people in anxious, “powerlessness

waiting” (Bourdieu, 2000; 228). Removed of the ability to predict, temporal power is felt in its most extreme form (Schwartz, 1975, Bourdieu, 2000, Comfort, 2009), made visible (Vitus, 2010), and the precarious condition(s) of this precarious temporality can be experienced (Chapters 6,7 and 8).

Up until here I have, as Bourdieu (2000; 228) calls us to do, ‘catalogued, and analysed’ the precarious temporality of waiting in the UK asylum system. I have drawn out links between time and power and have at least highlighted some of the governmental effects, if not governmental intentions (Darling, 2014), of the conditions of this waiting period. In the final section of this chapter, I will take this further to show how the condition of waiting can be seen as a governmental tactic, as the process of waiting itself can have governmental effects.

5.3 The Tactic of Waiting

Auyero’s (2010, 2011, 2012) study of the waiting rooms of welfare offices in the city of Buenos Aires provides a useful framework for understanding how the act of waiting can be read as having governmental effects. He drew from Bourdieu’s (2000) ideas around waiting and Tilly’s (1996) idea of ‘invisible elbows’ – “[c]ollectively, mistakes and rectifications, learning and practice, produce ‘systematic, durable social structure’” (Tilly 1996, 592 in Auyero, 2010). In so doing, he argues that while at first the effects of waiting may seem marginal, its repetition produces “subjects who know that when dealing with state bureaucracies they have to patiently comply with the seemingly arbitrary, ambiguous, and always changing, state requirements, and act accordingly” (Auyero, 2010; 857). He goes on to show that through this “practice, through this ‘governing technique’, that the state seems to be aiming for the creation of a docile body of welfare clients” (Auyero, 2011; 25, Foucault, 1977). In this light, we can see the way people are held in the asylum system and repeatedly asked to wait not only changes their behaviours, but the constant act of being made to wait may have the effect of producing people more willing to comply with the state. It produces self-regulating subjects, individuals who, through the way they conduct themselves, how they govern themselves, become “amenable to social, political and economic steering and regulation” (Lorey, 2015; unpagged). This disciplinary effect of waiting can be clearly seen in this chapter; for instance, when Sara complied with the last-minute change of appointment time or when Krishma, Noor and their friends said, “*they will never miss signing in day go on time no*

matter what". Waiting in the asylum system caused people to be aware that they were not able to act on their own interests (Kennedy and Markula, 2011), creating "subjects who do not raise their voice, who 'know' (because they learn in practice) that they have to be patient" (Auyero, 2011; 25).

In this chapter I have interrogated the temporality of waiting beyond Auyero's (2010, 2011, 2012) reading to show that waiting is experienced as both *dead time* and moments of *crisis*. It is therefore worth interrogating the tactic of waiting in the asylum system further to explore the role the unpredictable and precarious temporality of waiting may play in producing docile bodies (Foucault, 1977).

People begin to normalise waiting in dead time. This was perhaps most clearly illustrated in a conversation I had with Krishma and Noor about what they thought of being in the UK asylum system:

Noor: *She's [Krishma] feels like it's normal, she feels relaxed now.*

Emma: *So because you've been here for years doing this, has this kind of system become normal? Do you see it as quite normal?*

Noor: *When you refused then it can't be normal, but the rest of the time yeah it kind of its normal because it's been four years. We used to it.*

Emma: *Can you ask your mum [Krishma] what's normal to her?*

Noor: *She [Krishma] is saying like, yeah is normal but sometimes when she thinks about it she stressed and tense. That is like normal yeah.*

Here we see waiting in dead time, while stressful, becomes normal, whilst the moment of crisis is not. Indeed, as Noor goes on to explain, her mother is even "*happy*" to compliantly wait in dead time precisely because as it is not a moment of crisis:

[S]he's [Krishma's] happy, like when she waits for it, she's like at least they're not saying anything to us, we're living here, we've got money, home and everything, so we're living here and she gets happy. But when they do things quickly, quickly, so she feels like if they're doing it quickly then they might like detain us or something, they might send us back, because they don't listen. They just think like, no, no, it's not true whatever, we're saying that's true, you're not, like that's not right.

Moments of crisis are points in time where dead time, that is, time that is purposeless and meaningless, is interrupted. In these moments, there is no physical exertion of power, rather the change in someone's temporality happens through the ability of the Home Office to imply a possibility of change (even if not always a realisable one). As such, they are moments where hopes, but also someone's detainability and deportability, are brought to the forefront of the mind. When the conversation above occurred, Krishma and her family were appealing against refusal and trying to apply for the right to put in a fresh claim. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that it is not so much hope, but her and her families' detainability and deportability that is highlighted - even if they had received approval, they would still have needed to enter another process, with all its waiting, before there was any chance of gaining asylum. When waiting is experienced as a crisis which in someone's mind can only end in detention, deportation or entering another period of dead time, it is hardly surprising that remaining in the current period of dead time without having to endure the rush and risk that the crisis conjures becomes preferable.

However, this was not the only time that dead time was expressed as preferable to the chance for change. Hiruni explained to me:

Yes, the people who I speak to I feel like, they make me shake inside so, sometimes I feel like not getting my status, I prefer to stay where I am, it's safer ground, because, like when I was coming back today I met a lady who she got her status last year after three years of waiting, she's just, she's like, do some course, do something, this is your best time, once you get your status those job seekers people eat your brains out (laughs). I'm like great, she was like you're a foreigner you need to be a cleaner if you don't do your studies, and I'm like okay.

Without hearing something, the women can never escape the dead time and they can never gain refugee status; however, gaining status does not end the waiting. As they cannot work while seeking asylum, they will leave the process as an unemployed person, their support will stop within 28 days and they will need to find somewhere else to live (see Doyle, 2014, Basedow and Doyle, 2016). On receiving refugee status, they are flung into another moment of crisis, entering a new waiting period with drawn-out bureaucratic processes and new rules for them to comply with. As Auyero's (2010, 2011, 2012) work has shown, they would need to continue to submit and engage with the

bureaucratic state processes “if they are to obtain some resource crucial to their survival” (Auyero, 2010; 858, also see Doyle, 2014, Basedow and Doyle, 2016). As such, the hope for something is dampened, as gaining asylum would not end their waiting so much as cause them to enter into a new period of waiting, in which, if they are to survive, they would need to learn the new ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu, 2000). As Hiruni went on to explain, for some women, receiving status may be particularly daunting:

[Receiving status] still scares me, like if I get it, people talk about Council Tax, this tax, that tax, this percentage, it’s like I have no idea what to do (laughs), you know sometimes I feel like I to a certain degree, after this two years I feel like comfortable. Yes it would be nice to have a car and learn to drive and do things, but at the same time I feel like I’m safe now.

While she had experienced domestic violence and lack of freedom in her life in Saudi Arabia, she had never experienced paying bills or dealing with other financial matters. In the asylum system, she felt, in her own words she was “*stress[ed], but I’m also okay, better off than I was before ...[and] I’m being looked after*”; she is on “*safe ground*”.

It is clear, then, that the dead time becomes preferable to moments of crisis because of the fear of potential change these moments bring. Furthermore, waiting in dead time becomes articulated as normal people have learnt to be ‘patients of the state’. This is so much so that it can even result in people choosing not to engage in activities that might speed up a case:

I know in August and November she [my solicitor] wrote to the Home Office to ask them what’s happening and when I’ll know by and they replied both times to say, unfortunately we don’t have a date. The second time she wrote to me saying that I can go to an MP because by legally they have to give me a timeframe by when they should give me an answer. I thought about that for weeks and I decided that I’d rather keep on doing what I’m doing than knowing something that I can’t deal with. So I thought I’d wait.

(Hiruni)

The government tactic of waiting, then, as Auyero (2010, 2011, 2012) asserts, has disciplinary effects; however, it does this not only through repetitively telling people to ‘sit down and wait’ but also through its ability to shift people’s temporal experience of waiting. As the state can lurch someone between dead time and crises, this causes people

to prefer to wait in the dead time. This is despite the fact that staying in this dead time means their hopes for asylum cannot be realised and they will be held in this liminal period. In so doing, the act of making people wait becomes a tactic which can produce docile bodies, subjects who choose not to act on their own interests (Kennedy and Markula, 2011) who “do not raise their voice” (Auyero, 2011; 25).

5.4 Conclusion

Governmentality is both concerned with governing others and governing the self; “how individuals become both subject to and a subject of power” (Kennedy and Markula, 2011; 202). It is interested both in relationships concerned with the exerting of political sovereignty and also shaping, guiding or affecting a person’s conditions in a range of relationships and situations (Gordon, 1991). Here, I have drawn on Bourdieu’s (2000) understanding of waiting to explore how those in the asylum system are governed and how this governing has governmental effects, looking at the relationship between power and time within the asylum system. I considered the role that the state enactment of detention and deportation plays in producing a precarious temporality and how this makes people willing to wait. I then went on to further explore the temporality of the asylum system before, looking at how the act of waiting, being made to wait, can have governmental effects.

As I have outlined, those in the asylum system find themselves waiting. They hang between *crisis* and *dead time*, hearing something and hearing nothing, the Home Office having the power to adjourn, defer, delay, raise false hope or conversely rush or take them by surprise (Bourdieu, 2000). The process of waiting affects a person’s condition; it affects what they do, how they live their life and their sense of self. The rhythms and routines of daily life become modified in a “generalized and permanent state of insecurity” (Bourdieu, 1999a; 85) a person “hangs’... on the awaited decision” (Bourdieu, 2000; 228). When in the asylum system, someone’s life becomes focused around waiting and as such this affects “the subject’s capability to act on his or her own interest” (Kennedy and Markula, 2011). Furthermore, through the repetitive nature of this waiting, through this constantly being told to wait, people learn to accept and respond to the “‘authorities’ often capricious commands” (Auyero, 2010; 857).

Central to the logics of governmentality is its “simultaneous voluntary and coercive nature [...] In this way social order, is achieved through government, rests upon self-managing individuals making the choice to act in ways that ultimately serve to reproduce it” (Kennedy and Markula, 2011; 202, also see Lorey, 2015). People in the asylum process are subject to the temporal power of the state on the body, always being kept hanging, unable to dictate for how long or under what conditions they will be made to wait. However, there is no prison guard or physical restraint that makes people wait; rather, as I have shown, someone’s detainability and deportability, processes of fear and hope and the conditions and condition of waiting, cause people to become subordinate to the asylum process.

As such, this chapter has drawn out some of the ways temporality can be utilised as a technique of government (Foucault, 1991), highlighting the ways temporal power is produced, maintained and exerted in the lives of those seeking asylum and through the laws, processes and practices of the asylum system. Through doing this, it explored why people wait in the asylum system and what the temporality of that waiting is. It has shown that people live in a precarious temporality that is infused with border regimes. My participants experienced temporal power, often unable to control – or predict – the conditions of their waiting; their lives are precarious, or perhaps more accurately hyper-precarious (Waite et al., 2013, Lewis et al., 2015a, Lewis et al., 2015b). In order to look at the conditions of life in this waiting period, at the lived experiences of those who live in a precarious temporality, I will draw from the dual understanding of precarity laid out in the literature review (Chapter 3), to explore housing (Chapter 6) and finance (Chapter 7). Then, in Chapter 8, I return to the ideas of waiting and temporal power to look at how people ‘do waiting’. I illustrate how some actions can be read as oppositional practice to the processes of waiting laid out here, in so doing showing how people can challenge the exertion of temporal power. Finally, in Chapter 9, I return to look at precarious temporality to consider some of the limits of temporal power.

Chapter 6: Dual Precarity: The Condition(s) of Accommodation

None of my participants remained in one accommodation type for the entire research period, with most having already experienced several moves from when they first sought asylum to when I met them (see Appendix 2). As Hynes (2011; 8) points out, ‘no other group in the UK have their settlement patterns so tightly controlled or managed’. In accordance with government guidelines, almost everyone was initially placed in a hostel in Wakefield. This is known as ‘initial accommodation’, where people are accommodated on a short-term basis while they make an application for financial assistance (NAO, 2014). For many of my participants, this was a long way from where they initially claimed asylum, after which the majority were moved to outsourced NASS accommodation in Leeds. Particularly for those already residing in the UK, this meant upheaval as they moved from areas and support networks that they had already developed to new parts of the UK (Stewart, 2012). Several of the women also experienced other movements, being rehoused through NASS, detained, made destitute and staying in alternative forms of accommodation including with friends, ‘friendly strangers’, family and charitable organisations.

In this chapter, I look at the living conditions of my participants as they moved through this precarious landscape of accommodation. I utilise the dual approach to precarity, laid out in the literature review (Chapter 3), to look at both the physical, practical and tactile conditions of someone’s accommodation, as well as the condition of life; the ontological instability that living in this precarious temporality can produce. In so doing, I show that when trying to understand the experiences of lives of ‘precarity’ (in the Butler, 2006, 2009, 2016 sense), it is important to understand the roles these different types of precarity play. I argue that the infiltration of immigration regimes into accommodation processes and practices within the UK asylum system produce unstable, permeable and impermanent housing conditions that both impact people’s physical living conditions and ability to meet their basic day-to-day needs, whilst also creating a deeper sense of insecurity. As such, this chapter adds to the literature on both precarity in the asylum

system and housing precarity, providing a detailed account of condition(s) of accommodation for those in the UK asylum system.

6.1 Dispersal: Being Moved, an Unstable Time

The movement of people, particularly in the early stages of someone's asylum application, is part of what Hynes (2011) calls a policy of compulsory dispersal. It is designed to spread the 'burden' of housing people seeking asylum more evenly across the UK, with the majority of people being moved out of London and South East England (Hynes, 2011, Home Office, 2015a). Dispersal, in theory, offers several advantages; for instance, it reduces the concentration of people seeking asylum in specific areas and "spreads the financial costs of supporting them across a wider area" (Dwyer and Brown, 2008; 205). However, dispersal has been criticised as creating social and psychological exclusion (Bloch and Schuster, 2005, Gill, 2009b).

NASS initially placed most of my participants in short-term hostel accommodation before they were moved to longer term NASS accommodation. This is often classed as pre-dispersal or 'initial accommodation'; however, for all of my participants, this accommodation came after being moved from where they first claimed asylum, and for some, it came after a period of detention. This resulted in people having already been moved at least once before they were accommodated. This had a destabilizing effect, particularly for those who had already been embedded in communities in the UK, as Grace explains:

[A]ll my friends, for years I have friends [in name of town] [...] No one here knows me, who do I talk to. My children and God [...] no one.

Gill (2009b) examines the tensions between mobility and stillness in asylum contexts. He found, "the British state utilises both stillness and mobility in the governance of asylum seeking bodies. On the one hand, asylum seekers' personal freedoms are routinely curtailed both through their incarceration and through the requirements imposed upon them by the state in terms of 'signing in' [...] On the other hand, the British state employs a range of strategies of mobility that serve to deprive asylum-seeking communities of geographical stillness and, consequently, also often undermines their psychological stability" (Gill, 2009b: unpagged). In this context, being moved resulted in practical and

psychological disruption (Gill, 2009b); it prevented people from developing and maintaining networks of support.

Furthermore, the initial accommodation was normally mixed (Querton, 2012), This can have a particularly paralyzing effect on women, especially those who have experienced gender-based violence or are from a culture where mixing with men from outside the family is unacceptable. This not only causes some women to feel unsafe but limits their movement, affecting how they use the space. It can make the most basic tasks such as moving from the bedroom to use communal bathrooms or, when sharing rooms with other women, locking the door for getting changed or having a sleep almost impossible and causes communal spaces to be unwelcoming, in some cases meaning women even avoid leaving their rooms (Silove et al., 2000, Freedman, 2008b, Querton, 2012, NAO, 2014).

As Nadia explained when showing me the below photo, she found it difficult to be around the other residents, the room was cramped and the place unwelcoming. The move was disorientating and the condition so unpleasant she thought it was a prison when she first arrived.

[The hostel] was terrible, wasn't good. You know it's not the thing, [...] when I arrive the first day there I called my friend, I told oh they bring me, I'm in prison. [...] I called my friend, I told her, oh they bring me to prison, then my friend say, what? I say they bring me to prison. So my friend say, let me call the lawyer, give me your lawyer's name. So after she asked for somebody then the person say, no that is a hostel, it's not a prison. [...] I don't know how many, but a lot of people were there, both men and women, [...] was terrible.

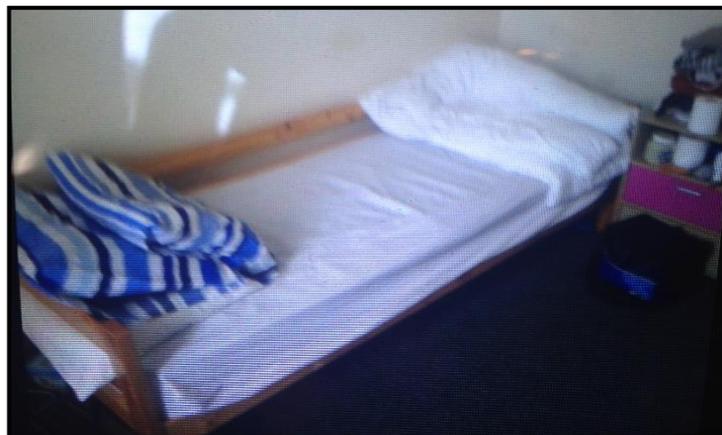


Photo 1: Pre-dispersal hostel accommodation

Some women, however, did not find the initial accommodation difficult, with a few developing friendships that helped them in feeling settled. For the majority though, the experience was unpleasant, with it being described as “overcrowded”, “noisy” and “inappropriate for children”. This was exacerbated by the fact that most people were only in the accommodation a few days to a few weeks, preventing relationships forming with the staff, local support organisations and between residents. The constant mobility of people seeking asylum can have a dehumanising effect, reducing the likelihood that people get to know each other as individuals (Gill, 2009a). As Gill’s (2009a) study highlights, this can also reduce the support individuals receive and even result in staff withholding support.

After this initial accommodation, people were displaced again into longer term ‘post-dispersal’ accommodation. As Appendix 2 shows, with the exception of Sara when she moved on to Section 4 support, NASS provided family units with accommodation on their own, while single people tended to be housed in shared accommodation. This is considered best practice in government policy, with contracts between the government and housing providers requiring that families are housed together in self-contained accommodation (NAO, 2014, Asylum Aid, 2015). Those in shared accommodation often continued to have many of the same challenges that existed in the initial accommodation. The houses were often seen as overcrowded and noisy. There were, however, some improvements, as the room sizes were generally bigger and the accommodation single-sex.

Experiences of moving from initial accommodation to post-dispersal accommodation were affected by their experiences so far and the conditions to which they were being moved. Those who found the initial accommodation difficult tended to express relief that they were no longer living there, whereas others found the process disorientating, suddenly finding themselves removed from friendships and support networks they had developed whilst in initial accommodation. When communication about where they were being moved to was not clearly given, it was particularly confusing, causing distress.

Hiruni was moved by minibus into a house with her son. Being housed on their own meant that there was no one else to ask about support and as she explains, she had very little orientation or other contact from the housing provider:

[T]hey just drop me off. [For] six months or so I didn't know who or what was happening. No one came checked on me, or nothing. [...]

that beginning it was so dark. ... it was really, really, terrifying because I didn't know what was can happen by now. I was sent here [...] The first day [...] because you know we were coming in the van. And we saw the supermarket, so we knew there was somewhere there [to get food]. [...] We couldn't fall asleep at night.

Gill (2009a) argues, with reference to detention centres, that mobility has governmental effects, subduing populations and negatively impacting upon their ability to build relationships which may help them in their asylum case (also see Gill, 2009b). Here, we can see that the regular movement of people in the early stages of an asylum application has a similar effect; it results in individuals feeling isolated and removes them from support networks that may help them cope with the situation. Furthermore, the regular movement produces a “precarious urban temporality” (Kalyan, 2013; 8) with the destabilizing effects affecting someone’s sense of belonging, even after the move has occurred. This is particularly the case when the process is not clearly explained and when people are removed from friendships and attachments they have already made.

6.2 Bareness and Belongings

The materiality of the homespace⁵ can provide an insight into people's identity and sense of belonging; however, this is often overlooked in studies of accommodation (Brown, 2011). In this project, photo tours provided a way to address this gap. The process of taking photos can help people reflect on things they often do not think about: It is not purely a visual method, as “people use their own subjective knowledge to interpret them” (Pink, 2013; 32) and it can allow “for the exploration of embodied and material aspects of everyday lives” (Datta, 2012; 1725, also see Chapter 4). Conversations from the photo tours help underpin much of the work in the rest of this chapter and provided an opportunity for the women in my study to consider the material conditions of their accommodation.

Previous work with migrants has found people often decorate their homes with items that they have either brought with them or that symbolize their country of origin. For

⁵ I see ‘home’ as a contested term and while people in the asylum system may sometimes (but not always) be offered accommodation, it should not be assumed that it will automatically be seen as a home.

instance in Tolia-Kelly's (2004b; 685) study of South Asian women living in the UK, she found photographs, prints and landscape photographs were displayed to incorporate "embodied memories of past landscapes and relationships" into the home (also see Tolia-Kelly, 2004a). Brown (2011; 231) found Polish migrants "prominently displayed" items such as the Polish flag, Roman Catholic iconography and national symbols as "illustrative of their Polishness". This, she argues, "demonstrates the way in which they want their Polish identity to be presented to others and the dominant, visible presence of restorative nostalgia for Poland in their lives" (Brown, 2011; 231). However, the first thing that struck me when entering people's accommodation was the bareness and emptiness of the spaces. As can be seen from the selection of pictures below there was often very little beyond the essentials in the accommodation⁶.



Photo 2: A living room in a family's NASS accommodation.



Photo 3: A child's bedroom in NASS accommodation.



Photo 4: A bathroom in a family's NASS accommodation. Her favourite room, as all the others felt bare and 'dirty'.



Photo 5: Mother and child shared room in NASS accommodation. She had added the child's pictures to the wall to try and make the room feel better for her child.

⁶ For anonymity, I have chosen not to include which room belongs to which participants. For a discussion see Chapter 4.



Photo 6: A living room in a family's NASS accommodation. The room has only a sofa and broken TV. The broken TV was in the house when she arrived, and it had made her children sad that it did not work.



Photo 7: Food from food parcel stored in a bedroom. In the shared house she has to keep her food in her room as she has no cupboard space.

This may, of course, be in part because of the financial limitations of the asylum system (see Chapter 7); however, it is worth considering more broadly why people may not have items in the house from, or which remind them of, their country of origin.

The bareness and lack of 'homemaking' was reinforced during the photo tours, as people showed me around and talked about the various rooms. When I asked if there was a favourite room or place in the house most people would say no, instead opting to show me methodically round the house. I only entered parts of the buildings I was invited into through asking "is there anywhere else you would like to go" rather than insisting on entering private or personal parts of the building; with the exception of two of the participants, everyone else chose to take me to nearly every room. However, people were not proud of their accommodation. There was no sense of "showing off their home" (Brown, 2011; 231). Instead people focused on the poor physical quality of the housing or emphasised how they did not feel it was well maintained and often lacked basics like desks for children to complete homework on or storage for clothes and other basics.

Furthermore, during the photo tours, I also asked all of my participants if they had anything of sentimental value that they had brought with them, or reminded them of, their country of origin. What became apparent very quickly was that very few of my participants had anything to share. Throughout all of the photo tours only two things were shown to me. One was a vial of holy water Rashmi had brought with them for good luck on their journey. She kept this on a small shelf in the living room. When asked she explained it was not because it reminded her of her country of origin but for religious reasons. The other was some photos of Nadia's children that still lived with her ex-partner

in her country of origin and whom she had not seen for several years. Rather than being publicly displayed, these images were hidden at the bottom of her drawer; when she got them out, she told me that they were very painful for her to look at. There may have been other things that participants had brought but chose not to share with me; nonetheless, this lack of material possessions linked to the country of origin is in contrast to previous research findings with other groups of migrants. Far from prominently displaying national symbols, people either had nothing to share or items were hidden away out of sight.

As people seeking asylum are fleeing persecution, this is perhaps unsurprising, as people may not feel the same affinity to their country of origin and/or it may simply be too painful to remember. However, as Sara explained when asked if she has anything sentimental with her, for some there is also a practical reason:

No. when I came here? I had a bag like this one, I have [son's] clothes just two or three T-shirts and two or three, [...], trousers and that's it, nothing else in there. I had the clothes I was wearing for myself, nothing else when I came here; I didn't have clothes, just for [my son].

She went on to explain she had to quickly and discreetly leave the house she was in. It was therefore simply not possible or practicable to bring much with her, forcing her to prioritise the basics over any sentimental objects.

Immigration categories, and people's lived experience of immigration, are not rigid. People do not fit neatly into boxes, rather immigration categories are fluid and overlapping, with people potentially moving through or across several categories (Düvell and Jordan, 2002, Koser, 2010, Bloch et al., 2011). Not all those seeking asylum in the UK arrive here initially fleeing persecution. For some people, it may be the situation in the country of origin, changes (for instance war, political or legal changes, environmental disaster or personal circumstances such as family conflict) that make it unsafe or it may be simply that someone only becomes aware that they have a right to claim asylum once in the UK. However, this research found that ones in the UK the processes and practises of the asylum system also have an impact on people's ability to retain belongings.

We can see this in the case of Barkisu; she initially came to the UK when she married her ex-husband. Barkisu only claimed asylum after her marriage ended and her family, in her country of origin, were told her sexual orientation. At this point she could no longer enter the house due to fear of her ex-husband, which meant that she could not retrieve

anything from her previous life. Furthermore, on claiming asylum, she was also detained, further stopping her from retrieving her belongings: it physically prevented her from entering the flat. When released from detention, due to compulsory dispersal, she was relocated to another part of the UK. As she explained, by this point she did not know whether her ex-husband was even still living in their previous flat and “*even if he was there, even if I knew, then no. [...] how can I go back now, not safe, no*”. This resulted in her having almost nothing from her previous life with her. Through detention and dispersal, the state had a role in making it difficult or impossible for Barkisu to retrieve items from her house and bring them with her as she entered the asylum system. However, in her case, there was also the added complexity of domestic violence that prevented her from re-entering the house. Even without this added complexity, the practices of the asylum system may have resulted in her being unable to bring items with her, as became apparent when talking to Rashmi.

Rashmi was in the UK on a working visa with her husband and children when the situation in her country of origin changed and the family could no longer return. She chose not to disclose to me the reasons they were seeking asylum, simply explaining that political problems meant it was unsafe for her family, particularly her husband to go back. Prior to claiming asylum, they had lived comfortably in a flat for over a year, furnishing it and making it feel like ‘home’. On claiming asylum, they were informed they were only allowed to take two bags per person with them and given only a few days to pack. They did not know whether they were going to be detained, deported or, as ended up happening, dispersed. The limited amount of packing space forced them to leave most of their items behind, prioritising essentials such as clothes:

***Rashmi:** When we left [previous town] we were only allowed two packages per one person so we gave a lot of stuff to the charity shops. [...] That’s the rules.*

***Emma:** What did you decide to bring? How did you make these decisions? It must have been really hard.*

***Rashmi:** It was really hard because every time I pack there was a lot of stuff behind so I had to sort it again as to what I most needed. Lots of clothes, toys, I left them. Some toys from when they were little left. And we had a TV and other stuff for the children. We brought only things that we thought we can’t buy from here. because we had no idea about the area so. [...]. So we chose only the most important things [...] We had no idea, we didn’t know if we*

were going to the house or the detention centre, we had no idea all we were told is that we were going out of [previous town].

The situation of Barkisu and Rashmi show two very different reasons why people who are on visas in the UK may need to claim asylum and why this process may result in them having few if any items from their country of origin, or even their time in the UK, with them. What runs through both stories is the role the asylum process plays in limiting what people are able to bring with them. Through limiting what people are allowed to pack, dispersing, and detaining, the process actively prevents people accessing or holding onto items that may have sentimental or symbolic value.

Here we see the movement of people before and within the asylum system has effects that go beyond what Gill (2009a, 2009b) identifies, as it affects not only people's ability to form relationships, but also their ability to retain their possessions. The precarious temporality that is produced is not just one of lost relationships but also one of lost belongings, both in the physical sense but also in a wider sense of belonging to a national group or country of origin (Papadopoulos, 2002, Walsh, 2006, Brown, 2011). I will pick this up again in Chapter 7, to explore more broadly how this mobility and precarious temporality affects people's belonging and belongings. However, here I want to keep the focus on accommodation and spaces of housing and so I now turn to look in depth at the physical conditions of NASS housing.

6.3 Privatisation, Housing Conditions and (lack of) Maintenance

Since 2010, there has been increased 'outsourcing' of government NASS accommodation to private companies (NAO, 2014, Darling, 2016). This move towards privatisation has been criticised, with studies finding it can result in a lack of ongoing support (Wilson, 2001) and a focus on generating profits from NASS contracts at the cost of providing suitable accommodation and services (Perry, 2003, Craig, 2004, Perry, 2005, Hynes, 2011). Darling (2016; 230) has examined this trend, noting that increased privatisation of NASS accommodation is an intensification of the wider process of neoliberalisation, that facilitates profit-driven immigration regimes. He argues the privatisation of NASS accommodation has resulted in depoliticization of asylum provision and produced an "asylum market" where "neoliberal norms of market competition, economic efficiency and dispersed responsibility are central" (Darling, 2016; 230). The lack of appropriate

housing and private companies' focus on profit can also result in people seeking asylum being placed in poor quality housing stock and 'hard to let' properties in parts of the city most likely to be experiencing overstretched resources and which are least able to cope (Robinson et al., 2004, Dwyer and Brown, 2008, UNHCR, 2013, Darling, 2016).

In 2012, a new contract was awarded in Leeds by NASS (on behalf of the government) changing the accommodation provider from the local authority (which had been responsible since the 1990s for the majority of asylum housing provision in Leeds) to G4S, a private security company (Leeds City Council, 2012, NAO, 2014). At the time, the local authority raised concerns, particularly about "the quality of the accommodation", "backlogs in maintenance work" and "the approach of some of the providers' housing staff" (Leeds City Council, 2012; unpagged). My study suggests this privatised NASS accommodation in Leeds is indeed normally located in undesirable parts of the city in 'hard to let' properties, with the majority of the women and services I worked with being based within or very near the poorest wards in Leeds (Leeds City Council, 2015). Furthermore, I found problems often occurred and continued throughout people's time in accommodation.

The majority of my meetings with the women happened in post-dispersal accommodation, normally run by G4S, the main contractor at the time. The conversation often turned to the condition of the property, with concerns primarily being raised around communication, maintenance and quality of housing. For instance, when Hiruni was discussing first moving into the house with her son, she not only discussed the lack of communication from the housing provider, but went on to explain that on arrival the house was unclean:

*[T]here were Pampers diapers and also the things in the bin.
Goodness knows how long they'd been there. They'd been there from
the person before you know.*

These problems worsened for Hiruni, as the housing provider could be slow or unwilling to deal with the issues:

... I'm tired of living in that house and not having a proper wardrobe or a kitchen which is decent without seeing snails. [...] Not snails, slugs. Slugs[...] I don't know what to do other than put salt and then they're so gooey and yucky and slimy.[...] It has been like two or three months now, they've been coming through a tiny hole in my kitchen and I told the people [housing provider] and they're like,

oh you know they're all over Leeds. And I'm like fix the hole in the wall and they wouldn't come [...] Not nice. They leave a trail behind so you know that they've been there [...]

The first year when we were here, it was frozen and I kept on saying no, [...] don't buy a heater, don't buy a heater, there's no need. Then the following year when it became cold it was like, I went into Argos and they had something like for £10, it stinks but does the job...I told them [housing provider] about it being cold, because even the basement window is broken...There's no glass, so just fitted a plank and there are loads of gaps so the basement is frozen, so it doesn't really heat up here. So I have been having good support I'd say, except the housing support which I don't complain.

The financial support given to people seeking asylum is only designed to meet the “essential living needs”, paying for things like “food, clothing and toiletries” with accommodation costs including built-in utilities being paid for by the housing provider (Home Office, 2016b; unpagged, Gower, 2015). However, as can be seen above, on more than one occasion, Hiruni has ended up using her own resources to try and fix the problems. The housing provider is not always willing to provide basic maintenance and is not keeping the accommodation at the required standard to fulfil their contractual obligation to provide appropriate housing (NAO, 2014).

While on other occasions the housing provider did provide the required level of maintenance, as Tharushi points out below this could be extremely slow, resulting in people having to live in unpleasant conditions for a prolonged period of time:

[I]n our home we got some bed bugs, so we phoned G4S and they took time to control them, time means they told yes we will come, come, come, but they didn't come for three weeks.

Hiruni was not the only participant to use their own money to purchase goods to help with the basic upkeep of the accommodation. On a particularly cold day, I visited Tharushi, who lived with her husband and two-year-old daughter in a terraced house. When I arrived, her husband was upstairs as normal, but she asked if her daughter could stay downstairs, explaining to me that it was too cold upstairs. The house had central heating, but it was not on; instead there was a freestanding electric heater in the room:

Emma: The heater [the electric heater] is that only in this room?

Tharushi: Yes, because I am not wasting the heaters, otherwise the heater bill is going up and we budget for it [the electric heater].

Emma: Oh right okay, they're [the housing provider] making sure you only have it [the central heating] on for a bit are they?

Tharushi: Yes, they told we don't need to waste, they said some people are switching on and then going outside, it's not good.

While this advice from the housing provider may have been aimed at avoiding waste and stopping people leaving the heating on when they are not in their homes, it resulted in Tharushi becoming concerned about the heating cost. This concern extended so far that she had chosen to save money to purchase an electric heater and turned the central heating off in much of the house, leaving it too cold for her young child. This suggests that the advice offered by the housing provider was at best misconstrued, and at worse inappropriate, with the effect being that Tharushi (and her young child) were left cold and forced to buy things they should not have needed to purchase.

The experiences of my participants reflect the council's concerns with regard to privatisation of NASS housing in Leeds; That is, they were placed in poor quality housing, having to wait long periods for maintenance to be conducted, if it was conducted at all, and the approach of housing providers could be inappropriate (NAO, 2014; see Chapter 5 for a discussion on the effects of waiting). For housing providers to negate this, they would need to communicate in a clear way that explains to people seeking asylum that they have a right to housing that is of reasonable standard, the right to have maintenance work conducted on the house and the right to live in reasonable conditions. However, in the case of privatised accommodation for people seeking asylum, it seems unlikely that housing providers will do this, as it would probably result in pressure on them to improve the quality of housing provided and thus likely decrease profits.

Furthermore, Tharushi went on to tell me that she did not like to complain because, in her words, *"I don't want to cause any problems for us"*. Not wanting to complain was common with all of my participants, and while making a complaint has no impact on someone's asylum application (Shelter, 2013), this did not stop people worrying about the effects of 'complaining'. As someone's current legal status is linked to their access to accommodation, it is hardly surprising that people draw a link between the two, and thus worry that complaining could have a negative impact on their case (Dwyer and Brown,

2008, also see Chapter 5 for more on not wanting to complain). Again, it seems unlikely that many efforts will be made to correct this when housing is privatised, as it would decrease profits. Indeed, in the time I was working with individuals and asylum support organisations I did not come across any attempt by the housing provider to inform people about their rights or to improve the service.

Through the examination of individuals' experiences of privatised G4S NASS accommodation in Leeds, I have shown housing is often poor quality, can be unclean and maintenance is often not carried out. In so doing, I extend work on the privatisation of asylum accommodation by embedding it in individuals' lived experiences. This allowed me to not only explore the housing conditions, but people's responses to them, causing me to argue that privatisation decreases the likelihood that these conditions will be improved. That said, it is important to note that whilst privatisation may depoliticise and worsen conditions for those seeking asylum, the housing provider is still working on behalf of NASS and by extension the government. The state can be understood as simultaneously retreating and advancing as "its withdrawal from direct service delivery [is] matched by its advance into regulation of service delivery by others" (Blanco et al., 2014; 3133). It is to the government that private housing has a contractual agreement and it is the government who has a responsibility to ensure people seeking asylum are housed appropriately.

6.4 "They don't care"

People without dependents tend to be housed in shared accommodation, regardless of the type of asylum support they are receiving; however, for those with dependents, being placed on Section 4 could result in being relocated. Sara was moved from single family unit accommodation to a shared house. The house accommodated her, her five-year-old son and another woman and her infant child, each family having one small bedroom and sharing the living space. Not only was this move disruptive to her and her son, removing Sara from friends and support networks (Gill, 2009b, Gill, 2009a), it resulted in her also having an over-30-minute walk each way to her son's primary school; the living conditions were less desirable and particularly difficult with the young child.

She found the house overcrowded with insufficient space to store food in the fridge and communal spaces 'impossible to keep tidy'. She explained that the cramped conditions

in the house also often resulted in her son getting less sleep; he was often woken by the other woman moving around or the baby crying. Furthermore, Sara expressed concern with sharing a room given her son's age:

He's still in the same room with me. Yes they said he's not allowed to stay with you. If it's a girl then yes you can stay yes, but he's a boy and my person [caseworker at a local charity] said if he's five years old then he can't stay with you anymore in your room, you know, but nobody listens to me.

Further discussion with Sara around the situation highlighted it was not only the overcrowding problem within the house. Showing me the bedroom she explained:

***Sara:** He sleeps here and I sleep here. Now they bring one other bed, I used to not have the bed... they leave me without a bed for a long time, I was sleeping here down and my son on the bed, because my bed was broken and this is by my friend. Anna she buy this for me, for me. Because they left you with one month without the bed.*

***Emma:** Okay so you think they kind of look after you less now you're on Section 4?*

***Sara:** Yes, [...] they don't know how is the situation, but nobody cares. [...] they just put this thing [a mattress] down and I sleep.*

Having somewhere to sleep is a basic need. However, it is not only essential for physical health and wellbeing, but also important symbolically, as it provides dignity (Seltser and Miller, 1993). To be left without a bed for her and only a mattress for her son for several weeks increased her sense of being unimportant, causing her to rely on a friend to fulfil this basic need (see Chapter 8 for more on friendships). The poor housing and lack of maintenance, including the slow provision of basics such as beds, resulted in the material conditions in which they lived decreasing since being on Section 4, leaving her to feel "nobody cares".

Furthermore, as I took the below pictures of the house, Sara explained it was not only the overcrowding that was problematic. The lack of maintenance and general conditions caused health problems and she was worried about the less than desirable location having a long-term impact on her son's future.



Photo 8: A 'garden' at a NASS house.



Photo 9: Rubbish on the road outside a NASS house.

... [O]kay forget about me, but if one child he's going to be happy, they wouldn't ask for this situation, they got the sink here [indicating to the garden] and that you see the chain. And do you know how many times I told to the people [housing provider] I can't let my son here in all this situation. You see, all this rubbish here, in front of my door it was here, I clean it and I put it there. I can't let him play here because of all that. If they put something [meaning a fence or barrier at the edge of the garden] here, but no they didn't and even all of this here they don't care. You know he was playing here and all his body became like spots, spots, spots and I was thinking he have chicken pox, but it was not chicken pox, it was from the rubbish that's here... And the lady who lives just here, the police come and go to her house and they find the flowers like this, hashish you know, even inside in the house, it was too big like three yes, and they bring it out. And my son he was watching all these things you know, he was sat in the house, she was saying all these things. But they bring us in a place like this you know and if your child grow up in this situation, all these things, how then after he is going to? I don't know.

This poor-quality shared housing seems particularly inappropriate for those with children, and left Sara worried about her and her son's welfare, causing her to reiterate that "they don't care".

While being in Section 4 housing may have further decreased the quality and stability of Sara's housing situation, her narrative highlights how poor, unsuitable and insecure housing can cause dual precariousness: it had a physical impact on Sara and her son's health and wellbeing simultaneously, causing a feeling that nobody cared about them, resulting in a deeper sense of precariousness. In the next section, I further explore this deeper sense of precariousness, showing how it is experienced more broadly by those in NASS accommodation.

6.5 A Guest in a House that is Not Your Home

Several of the participants commented about the ability of the housing provider and inspectors to come into the accommodation at any time. Sometimes they were sent letters and advance warning, told that people were coming and the reason for the visit but at other times the inspectors simply showed up. Hiruni explains:

This morning like someone knocked at the door and they opened the gate, it was an inspector, G4S inspector that we like, okay. I wasn't even ready; the whole house was a disaster, a mess. That's the scariest thing. This guy, he didn't measure anything, he just looked at the switches, asked me whether everything is okay and had a look around and he went. I had no warning ...and I'm like, I was in my nightie and I remember thinking I heard some noise downstairs and I came down to see.

Housing providers and inspectors coming into the house, particularly unannounced, is an invasion of the normally private space. It “subverted physical boundaries” and “represented the literal invasion of domestic space” (Raven-Ellison, 2015; 158). It disrupted performances of everyday activities. Raven-Ellison (2015) utilises the term ‘porous’ to describe the way the NASS accommodation is experienced as unstable and permeable. She argues it is seen as an extension of detention due to the staff’s ability to enter unannounced, as well as because the person seeking asylum can be taken into detention from the house. She concluded that “*knowing* the state had the power to penetrate the home disturbed the fragile sense of security that being at home might have offered, distorting transitional notions of home as a safe haven, or replace of refuge and comfort” (Raven-Ellison, 2015; 155, emphasis in original). It brings to the fore someone’s detainability, and I would add deportability (see Chapter 5). As Blunt and Dowling (2006; 27, in Brickell, 2012a; 575) point out, the home is “not separated from public, political worlds but is constituted through them: the domestic is created through the extra-domestic and vice versa”. However, ‘home’ itself is a contested and deeply political term, laden with meaning and emotion, so whilst people are in NASS accommodation it should not be assumed that they will perceive it as a home (see for instance Black, 2002, Papadopoulos, 2002, Ahmed et al., 2003, Gedalof, 2007, Suk, 2009, Darling, 2011a, Brickell, 2012b, Raven-Ellison, 2015).

The destabilising effects of the porosity of the accommodation also needs to be considered in the context of women's experiences. In the case above, Hiruni is a single parent fleeing domestic violence, of Islamic faith and from a conservative Islamic country. A man able to enter her house while she is alone and in her nightgown was to her "*the scariest thing*". Firstly, for her, this invasion of the 'home space' transcended culturally-appropriate barriers. Hiruni wore her hijab outside the house or when around men, and wished to dress 'modestly' and on several occasions, discussed the challenges she faced in adjusting to interacting with men from outside the family. The G4S inspector entering the house, when she was potentially alone, without warning or providing her with any chance to get dressed placed her in a difficult position. Not only was it an invasion of the normally private space of 'the house' but also space of the body, as she was unable to dress in a way she felt appropriate.

Secondly, regardless of Hiruni's religion or cultural relationship with men, her past experiences of domestic violence are also likely to have increased the discomfort, and fear, she felt in a man entering the house unannounced. An act like this could trigger traumatic and stressful memories for the individual, and given the global prevalence of gender-based violence, regardless of the reason a woman may claim asylum, it could not be assumed that she would not be affected (Silove et al., 1997, Heise et al., 2002, Palermo et al., 2014). In fact, the majority of women in the asylum system are believed to have experienced some form of gendered violence during their lives, with this often being a common element of women's asylum claim (Home Office, 2010a). This is also likely to affect women's perception of their accommodation, as previous experiences of domestic violence can extend beyond the timespace in which it occurs, infusing future accommodation with a sense of unhomeliness and fear (Warrington, 2001, Suk, 2009, Pain, 2014, Pain and Staeheli, 2014).

For anyone, having a person enter the house without warning – particularly when you are in bed or alone – can be scary or traumatic. For those in the asylum system, this ability of the housing provider, on behalf of the government, to enter the house unannounced highlights a lack of privacy and the porous nature of the house/state border. For women, particularly when men entered the house, it can be even more inappropriate and, to quote Hiruni, "*scary*". It not only highlights the lack of privacy, but transcends religious and cultural norms and could be extremely traumatic for an individual.

Sara echoed these concerns, noting the effects this inability to regulate who entered the accommodation had on her being able to develop any sense of ownership or belonging in the house:

... [T]hey come they open the door with key, they don't ask if you are inside, if you don't how you know. They knock two times, even if you don't open the door they think you're not at home, they open the door and they come inside, yes even maybe while I sleep and things like that. [You] can't stop them when you are asylum they can come you know just when you get your papers, then they can't go to your house. But now they say it is not your house, you're just living here for a little bit of time. [T]hey say it is not your home, you need to clean it, you need to leave everything how you use it, it's not your home you know, you can't do changes and things like this. Because that's for use when more people come.

The sense that “*it is not your home, you're just living here for a little bit of time*” highlights that this situation is not only precarious but hyper- precarious. It is infused with the actions of immigration regimes which constantly reminds people their position in the house is non-permanent. Of course, many people do not have stable housing conditions and could potentially be made homeless any time (see for instance Kalyan, 2013, Vidal et al., 2000, Ferreri et al., 2017); however, what is continuously emphasised is not only their removability from the house, but also the country. The permeability of the house continuously emphasises that they are not permanent residents, but rather ‘guests’ who are detained and deportable (De-Genova, 2002, 2005, 2016).

Since at least 9/11 the notion of the ‘nation-as-home’ has gained increased political traction (Manning, 2003, Walters, 2004). In the press and public discourse, people seeking asylum are constantly reminded they must not become a ‘burden’ (Darling, 2016) or ‘abuse our hospitality’ as a nation (Darling, 2009). People seeking asylum, along with other migrants, must not ‘unmake’ the host’s home; successful ‘integration’ therefore depends upon well-behaved guests leaving any complicating “‘cultural practices’ by the door as they cross the nation’s threshold and adhere to a set of ‘reasonable’ house rules laid down by the host” (Sirriyeh, 2013; 202). This not only requires the ‘guest’ to adapt and change (Gedalof, 2007), but also justifies the infiltration of board regimes into domains such as the home (Raven-Ellison, 2015). Both at the scale of their

accommodation and on the scale of the nation, the person seeking asylum finds themselves as an outsider, a 'guest' in someone else's 'house'.

The effects of the infiltration of the 'hospitality' and 'guest' discourse into people seeking asylum's daily life can be seen in the two conversations with Tharushi below. What we can see here is that despite all the problems and lack of 'care' that my participants experienced when engaging with the housing provider, the housing provider is positioned as the 'host' who looks after the 'guest':

G4S is looking after us and they all are giving all the furniture and everything. So if anything G4S are taking good care of asylum seekers, if anything, because my baby went to the kitchen [...] and the glass broken and I told G4S and they told they will put a baby gate. Like that, they're giving good care for us asylum seekers.

... [T]hey come, they knocked the door yes. Because they have all the keys with them, so they don't need to tell us. If they have the identity card they come and do everything and they go [...] we can't demand them [...] and we don't have any many things [...] because everything is their things, haha, they gave all the things for us.

Of course, in these instances Tharushi may have indeed been grateful for the support; however, it is worth noting it was also her who did not put the heating on despite the cold as she did not "want to cause any problems"; she did not want to be a 'burden'. Furthermore, the sense that appearing anything other than grateful worried her came across particularly strongly as, despite me knowing there were problems in the housing situation, Tharushi was anxious and keen to emphasise that the "housing providers take care". She further emphasised this after the recorder was off and simultaneously checked the work would be anonymous and asking for reassurance that I would not tell the housing provider about anything negative she had said.

People did not only refrain from complaining despite being left in cold and inadequate housing, but they also wanted to appear grateful. I would argue that this may be because they felt it was necessary to ensure the continuation of the 'hospitality' not only in terms of the 'hospitality' of the housing provider on whom they rely for physical shelter, but also the UK government, who could remove them from the state at any time.

Implicit in the 'guest/host' relationship is an uneven power dynamic. While the 'host' looks after the guest, the guest can also overstay their welcome, and the hosts can, at any time, terminate the guest's stay. The guest does not have any rights to be in the

house, or in the case of people seeking asylum, does not have the rights of residency granted by citizenship. For people in NASS accommodation, the porosity of the house alongside the temporal uncertainty that their residency can be terminated at any time fills the 'home space' with a deep sense of precariousness. This precariousness goes beyond that which is felt in many other unstable housing situations, as it is infused with immigration regimes. It is hyper-precarious, the point where housing precarity and immigration regimes merge. As such, it is not only about uncertainty around whether – or if – someone will meet their basic need for housing, but also acts to constantly make people feel unstable, reminding them of their detainability and deportability, and, I would add in the housing context, their *destitutability*.

6.6 Destitutability: Threat of Removing Support

Up to here, I have outlined the problems people face when engaging with, often privatised (outsourced), NASS accommodation. However, to receive NASS support, someone must both be in the asylum system and able to pass the 'destitution test' (Gower, 2015 also see Chapter 2). Therefore, at any time, a change in their socio-legal situation can result in access to public funding and housing being removed (see Chapter 2), placing people on NASS support in a precarious position. Darling (2009; 649) argues these policies result in the UK having a "deliberate policy of destitution", resulting in "sovereign abandonment" whereby "asylum seekers are relegated to a position reliant solely upon the ethical sensibilities of others". As such, being made destitute is not the same as being made homeless in other contexts; it is the government actively throwing someone into crisis, changing their socio-legal status, revoking the state's recognition and support (Dwyer and Brown, 2008).

Without the right to work or access to NASS support, people have no legal access to money, becoming reliant on charities and individuals to meet their basic needs (Crawley et al., 2011, Tyler, 2012). This places someone in a precarious position, where they may constantly have to look for new housing situations and/or enter or stay in exploitative situations in order to ensure access to food and shelter (Crawley et al., 2011, Lewis et al., 2013, Lewis et al., 2015b). In some cases, this 'support' can be a lifeline; however, it can also be "riddled with numerous accounts of abuse and exploitation" (Raven-Ellison, 2015; 150, also see Waite and Lewis, 2017). Furthermore, because arrangements are often only temporary, people are "unable to plan for the future, reinforcing a generalised state of

precarity” (Raven-Ellison, 2015). In this section, I will draw in depth from Barkisu’s experience to outline how a lack of NASS support can result in people tolerating abuse and entering into sex work.

Barkisu was never housed in NASS accommodation during my research. She had come to the UK on a marriage visa. That marriage had broken down due to her having had a relationship with a woman. Her ex-husband had informed her family and it was no longer safe for her to return to her country of origin due to family opinion and national laws on sexuality, so she claimed asylum. At that point, she was briefly detained before being released. After being released, it is unclear exactly what happened to her; however, she then met and had a relationship with another man.

For the majority of the research period she lived with this man who she referred to as her “*husband*”. As she had accommodation and a partner who legally worked in the UK, she received no asylum support. Barkisu found this very difficult as it meant money was extremely tight:

I’m not working, I’m not entitled to no benefits, We are like financially broke because he’s only doing four hours and he pay the house £105 a week.... Yes and he’s paying the council tax nearly £90 or something... and he’s paying the bills, the food, everything, you know, it’s hard for us, it’s really totally hard, we really try but it’s hard.

This also meant Barkisu was reliant on her partner for meeting basic needs. She would always have to ask him if she wanted money and she often did not wish to ask, causing an uneven economic situation within the household:

He’s a really nice guy, I will not lie, he’s really helped me and like today if like he didn’t ...I didn’t see the money he put [out for me] so that I will give the landlord, I will just wait, because I’m not a thief. [...] I’ll not go outside and start begging people one £1, I have to wait for him.

But for say I don’t have no income support, no benefit, no nothing, I never take it to this country, never. And it’s my husband who’s doing everything. If I go to sign in, before I was going every month, now I’m going every two weeks, it’s my husband who gives me bus fare, anywhere I’m going it’s my husband.

During the research, her claim was denied. Prior to this, had she separated from her partner she could have applied for asylum support; however, she would now find herself

destitute. Having met several times, apart from the financial stresses above, Barkisu had always given me the impression it was a positive relationship.

Towards the end of the research, I suddenly found it difficult to get in touch with her. She eventually got in touch and I found out she was now living in charity provided accommodation in a nearby city, having left her husband due to abuse. When I saw Barkisu she told me the abuse had been going on throughout; however, she told me it had got worse towards the end, with her husband being violent, threatening to tell the family in her country of origin things about her and to kick her out the house. While she did not directly link her claim failing and the worsening of the abuse, the timing and nature of the two suggests they could be linked.

***Barkisu:** He used to abuse me. I would pretend I was with [a friend]. [...] He would abuse me, insulted me, verbally, physically beaten me so all the stress I'm going through, I can't.... I have to...because I'm not well physically. [...] and emotionally, mentally, I'm so like [...] and the stress on top of what I'm going through so I decided to leave the house but before I left the house, [he] took my stuff outside the house, he threw my stuff out. He threw everything out and told me not to come in so I'm like ok [...]*

***Emma:** When your husband was being abusive towards you was it something that made it more difficult to leave that you had nowhere to go [...].*

***Barkisu:** Obviously, I stayed there because but at the end of the day I tell you the truth I loved him [...] but if I left that house, he was hitting me. If I couldn't, if he threw me out of the house, where should I go?*

***Emma:** So you and other women, they are with someone abusive and the Home Office does not support, there's nothing you can do.*

***Barkisu:** I don't have this help. Even if he throw my stuff out, [...] I can't go [...], lying down there [outside the house], maybe he will [feel] sorry for me. ... I will stay.*

While Home Office guidelines state "If your relationship with a British citizen or someone settled in the UK has broken down because of domestic violence, you may be able to apply for indefinite leave to remain" (Home Office, 2013a; unpagged) and occasionally emergency cash support can be given (Home Office, 2015a), the reality is that for those

who are not here on a visa and do not currently have an application in the asylum process, the options are very limited, with people having almost no access to public funds (ASAP, 2014). Research has also shown that the fear of destitution and a lack of knowledge about options is likely to result in people staying in potentially difficult situations for longer than they otherwise would (Raven-Ellison, 2015). For Barkisu this was certainly the case. The lack of access to welfare support resulted in her being in a precarious housing situation whereby she had to remain with her partner in order to meet her basic needs. This produced an uneven power dynamic within the relationship; the threat of destitution was used against her and resulted in her tolerating abuse for longer than she otherwise may have, even feeling that she had no choice but to try to make him let her stay after he had thrown her out.

Destitution in itself is clearly a challenging prospect for anyone. However, as Barkisu went on to explain, the experience of being destitute is also felt in gendered ways:

Emma: Do you think your experience of the asylum system would be different if you were a man?

*Barkisu: ...[W]hen my husband threw me out, remember I told you about it, I don't have to tell, I have no help, how should I be if I'm a woman, I should go out and do prostitution just to survive or what? What should I do to survive? I have to do something, please, I have to do something to survive. I haven't done this before. I have enough because at least we have shelter, we have somewhere to stay, you go to school, you shall stay, you have heating, you have this, you know. What should I do, you know? My husband, I was here with him, he threw me out. I don't have Home Office support, I don't have government support, I don't have no support. They don't allow me to work, they don't, now living, how do they think I should live? How?
[...]*

Emma: Do some women do sex work when they are destitute?

Barkisu: Yeah, if they don't, I'm bisexual. If I don't have my body, [...] If I didn't have my body, I wasn't, my husband threw me away. So bad, you have something to give so some people they do it. So these [...] people, they do it. It's not because they want to do it. They do it because they have no choice.

Exploitative living and working conditions can often provide the means of survival for destitute people seeking asylum and the way it is experienced can often be gendered (see

Waite et al., 2013, Lewis et al., 2015b, Waite and Lewis, 2017). For some women, including Barkisu, sex work and/or exploitative sexual relationships were a way to survive (Crawley et al., 2011, Waite et al., 2013, Lewis et al., 2015b, Raven-Ellison, 2015).

While domestic abuse, sex work and sexual exploitation are not limited to women's experiences, they are disproportionately felt by women (Raven-Ellison, 2015). In the asylum process, this is particularly true, as women are more often dependents on asylum applications or here on marriage visas, resulting in their status in the UK often being linked directly to the status of their partner (Blinder, 2014, Blinder, 2016). This results in conditions under which abuse is more likely to be tolerated and people are less likely to report problems to the police (Raven-Ellison, 2015). Domestic abuse is not only physical abuse, but according to the UK government can also include, although is not limited to, psychological, sexual financial and emotional abuse (Home Office, 2013a). Given some people in the asylum system find themselves financially dependent on partners, friends and strangers, this provides a situation in which an unequal power dynamic increases the likelihood for abuse to occur. People can use the 'currency of shelter' to get away with abuse or/and sexual exploitation (Raven-Ellison, 2015, Waite and Lewis, 2017). When/if someone is made destitute this situation can worsen, as without charity support they may have no choice but to enter, or stay in, situations where they experience exploitative conditions, potentially entering sex work and/or tolerating multiple physical threats to the body to survive (Raven-Ellison, 2015, Waite and Lewis, 2017). People who are destitute find themselves in a hyper-precarious situation, experiencing "sovereign abandonment"; they are "relegated to a position reliant solely upon the ethical sensibilities of others" (Darling, 2009; 649). Furthermore, while destitution in itself may be a hyper-precarious situation, its effects likely go beyond the timespace in which it occurs.

In Chapter 5 I examined how detention and deportation have wider effect, producing a precarious temporality that go beyond the timespace in which it is enacted effecting others who are seeking asylum. It seems likely that the threat of destitution, someone's destitutability, is likely to also reinforce this precarious temporality. While the threat is not to be removed from the nation (either through being detained out of sight or deported altogether) it is still a threat of sovereign abandonment. It places those in the asylum system not only in an unstable situation where they could constantly lose their shelter at any time, but it brings to the fore their human fragility and powerlessness in

the face of evermore-present everyday governmentality (Butler, 2006, 2016). People experience a dual sense of hyper-precariousness – their housing, associated finance, and even socio-legal position are unstable and changeable, and so too is their broader condition of life.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how conditions of accommodation for those in the UK asylum system are not stable, with all of my participants experiencing several moves and types of accommodation. This movement not only limited people's ability to build relationships, especially in the early stages of the asylum system, but also prevented them from retaining their belongings. In so doing, I extended Gill's (2009b, 2009a) argument on the mobility of people seeking asylum to show how dispersal and accommodation movements have a destabilizing effect. I argued a loss of accommodation and material belongings has a deep ontological effect, producing a precarious temporality (Kalyan, 2013). Through looking at the physical conditions of government contracted NASS accommodation, I extended this to show that the housing situation is not only dirty, poorly maintained and often inadequate but also permeable and unstable. The infiltration of immigration regimes creates a hyper-precarious situation. People know their housing is linked to their socio-legal status and thus it is not only unstable in the way many contemporary housing situations are, but the practices of housing people seeking asylum constantly acts to remind them of their detainability, deportability and destitutability.

Through utilising a dual approach to precariousness, this chapter has provided an in-depth exploration of accommodation in the asylum system. The chapter illustrated how accommodation conditions are precarious in the everyday, often practical sense; it is often physically inadequate (cold, dirty, unsafe or in disrepair) and someone could lose access to it at any time but, also ontologically precarious (people have a deep sense of instability and awareness of their human fragility). This is underpinned by the deep sense of precariousness brought about through the constant infiltration of NASS and the border agency staff into people seeking asylum's daily lives and the threat of destitution and deportation to a situation where they may face exploitation, persecution or even death. Through this, I extended work on both precarity in the asylum system and housing precarity by illustrating how the infiltration of immigration regimes into accommodation

causes dual hyper-precarity, providing a detailed account of the condition(s) of accommodation. As such, I have also shown the importance of developing, and utilising, this dual approach to precariousness when trying to understand experiences of lives of 'precarity' (in the Butler, 2006, 2009, 2016 sense).

As discussed, for people seeking asylum, their housing and access to finance is dependent on their current socio-legal status (Dwyer and Brown, 2008). In the next chapter, I will extend this work to consider how access to finance affects someone's ability to meet their basic needs, focusing on the seemingly mundane acts of shopping and saving. Building on the dual approach to precariousness laid out here, I will look in more depth at how precarity in the everyday sense impacts on, and in turn may be impacted by, someone's deeper ontological precarity. In examining the links between these two ways of experiencing precariousness, I will draw out both their co-contingent nature and how tensions between the two can arise.

Chapter 7: Navigating a Precarious Financial Landscape

While the women in my study waited in the UK asylum system, they may sometimes have had their accommodation paid for, but they still needed to eat, keep themselves and their accommodation clean, acquire seasonally appropriate clothing and be able to phone people and get to places, including asylum appointments. Waiting does not only cost time, it costs money (Auyero, 2011). In the UK asylum system, someone's financial situation is dependent on their socio-legal status - how and if someone can access money is unstable. At the time of my study, the government gave adults seeking asylum just over five pounds a day, with slightly more for children (this addition for children has since been removed, and the amount for adults has not increased despite inflation, see Chapter 2); this could either be as cash or on an Azure payment card, depending on their personal situation and status (see Chapter 2) and is "significantly below the poverty line" (City of Sanctuary, 2015; 1, also see Allsopp et al., 2014). Furthermore, if someone's status changes, they could be made destitute with no recourse to public funds. This creates a financially precarious situation; people's lives are filled with a precarious temporality around how, and if, they will access the basic finances needed to survive.

Several reports have worked to map the practical challenges for people seeking asylum within this precarious financial landscape (see for instance Penrose, 2002, Reynolds, 2010, Society, 2012, Carnet et al., 2014); however, to my knowledge, there is no academic literature that looks in depth at the acts of shopping and saving within this situation. Academic work has focused more broadly on how and when people find themselves in poverty (Allsopp et al., 2014), on healthcare costs (Norredam et al., 2005, Hall, 2006, O'Donnell et al., 2007, Asgary and Segar, 2011), on the specific situation of destitution (Hailbronner, 2007, Crawley et al., 2011, Cuthill et al., 2013, Bloch, 2014), the roles relationships (Waite and Lewis, 2017) and charities (Darling, 2011b) play in survival strategies and why the state may produce this situation (Bloch and Schuster, 2002, Sales, 2002, Stewart, 2005, Squire, 2016). To begin to address the gap around shopping and saving for those seeking asylum, I will draw from the framework of dual precarity (see Chapters 3 and 6) to focus on both the everyday challenges of shopping and saving, whilst

also drawing out the impacts on people's sense of self. I firstly consider people's financial position and their day-to-day acts of 'shopping'. Here I lay out the practical difficulties and the feelings and emotions the financial processes of the asylum system engenders. Secondly, I turn to look in more depth at the challenges around saving, before looking at how mobility and precarious temporality impact decision-making processes. Through mapping out this precarious financial landscape, I develop the understanding of precarity in this thesis. I examine the interplays between these two precarities, showing that while in many ways they are constitutive of each other, a nuanced reading is important in order to draw out the co-contingencies and tensions between them.

7.1 Stigma of Financial Dependency

The current neoliberal climate focuses on the need for individuals to 'pull' themselves out of poverty, with those receiving benefits, particularly for any length of time, finding themselves surrounded by negative connotations (Wiggan, 2012, Jensen, 2014). For people seeking asylum, this can be particularly hard, as it is coupled with anti-immigration discourse that positions them as a 'burden' on the state (Darling, 2016, Nardelli, 2016). This places people seeking asylum in a difficult position as they have every right to seek asylum but almost always no right to work (see Chapter 2). The vast majority of people seeking asylum have no choice but to accept this welfare support and, unless their socio-legal status changes (i.e. they receive leave to remain), they have few legal methods by which to change their financial situation.

I hear too many people saying that oh asylum people they have house, you know, they take benefits and they want more. People think like, oh all the asylum people they are here just to get this kind of house and the £96 they give me over the week with my son. They think this is enough for me, [...] but you know, they can go to hell. I have English friend as well [...] she's very good friends to me [...] but sometimes she doesn't understand exactly how do I feel. Because she says for example, yes but it's good you have your house and you're having benefits [...] But asylum people they don't come here to take the house or for the benefits, but they don't have any other choice because if the Home Office gives us a licence to work I think everybody will go to work, [...] if I had the right to work I don't need the benefits, I will go for myself I will work because I am being crazy staying all the time in the home.

(Sara)

In talking about benefits and other support, Sara draws out the negative perceptions she has faced. She states that people perceive her as ‘just’ here for the housing and financial support, and by extension, implies that some may think she is not really in need of protection. It seems the discourse of the ‘undeserving’ and/or ‘bogus’ ‘asylum seeker’ that Rosemary Sales identified in her 2002 paper *The deserving and the undeserving? Refugees, asylum seekers and welfare in Britain* is still present, and, importantly, felt negatively by those seeking asylum (also see Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008, Anderson, 2013, Holmes and Castaneda, 2016). Sara’s frustration with this attitude is clear as she is keen to highlight that she has no choice and would rather work, going so far as to say benefits

is nothing for me, I don’t need this kind of house, I don’t need the benefits, I want to do something for my life and to do something like all the people do, you know.

The women in my study regularly talked about how they wanted to work and how they had worked before coming to the UK, “*never relying on benefits*”. This of course may well be true; however, in making these statements, the women also made a clear distinction between themselves and negative connotations of the ‘bogus’ or financially burdensome ‘asylum seeker’ (Sales, 2002, Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008, Darling, 2016), and the ‘workless’ or ‘lazy’ benefit claimant (Wiggan, 2012). Keen to differentiate themselves, they are attempting to counter these negative associations by affirming they share the appropriate values; they wish to show people seeking asylum “are fit to belong because they have the right kinds of values, unlike criminals and benefit scroungers” (Anderson, 2013; 6). My participants drew on images of their past self, and their future aspirations, in order to present themselves as ‘productive’ members of neoliberal capitalist society, personally responsible and self-motivated to ‘succeed’ (Wiggan, 2012). However, the inability to do anything other than rely on welfare support sat uncomfortably with these neoliberal ideas of self and caused people to feel like they were ‘begging’:

*Before we were asylum seekers we used to earn and spend, but after that we can’t work so have to depend on what they’re giving us [...]
It’s like begging.*

(Rashmi)

As I will come to in more depth below, receiving charity can be a complicated and emotional process especially when it offers no opportunity to become independent (Fothergill, 2003, Darling, 2011b, Waite and Lewis, 2017). Of course, these benefits are not charity, but this is often how it feels to the individual as they have no other way to survive. The use of the term ‘begging’ is particularly telling. Not only does it feed into the idea that someone seeking asylum is a ‘burden’ on society, but beggars and begging are particularly negative terms associated with those on the margins of society who are seen as outside the normal social order (Anderson, 2013; 5).

What is likely to have added to the sense of charity and of ‘begging’ is the way people seeking asylum are distinguished from the rest of the population. Not only are the conditions for receiving asylum support different, affected by their socio-legal status, but the amount of money is also considerably below that of other welfare recipients (see Chapter 2). They are treated as a different ‘other’; this does not exclude them from the negative discourses around benefit claimants, but instead feeds into an image of the ‘undeserving’ migrant who gets ‘different’ treatment (Anderson, 2013). The guest and host nation become relevant here again. The person seeking asylum is supported by the host nation but has no way to support themselves, so therefore is also reliant on the host nation’s hospitality for survival (see Chapter 6 for a discussion on the ‘guest’ and ‘host’ discourse).

The practical ramifications of receiving less financial support is also important. One of the justifications for the difference is that household bills and accommodation are paid for with financial support only designed to cover ‘essential needs’ (Home Office, 2016b, Gower, 2015). These payments were also not designed to be long-term (Gower, 2015). The reality is that what it costs to live for one week cannot be simply multiplied up to work out what it costs to live for one year; the payment was only designed to pay for things such as food, a small amount of local travel, cleaning and personal care items, not longer-term items such as heaters or winter coats. Furthermore, as Sara explains, the cash payment was inadequate even for meeting her and her son’s essential living costs:

It’s not enough even for the food believe me, £96 believe me £96, I pay £15 for my bus ticket to go to college without food, without drink in the morning. £15 just for the bus ticket, the college didn’t give me the bus ticket, I pay for myself. Then you need to go to supermarket, you buy some things today to make last until Friday,

*things finish you know, you need to buy meat, it's so hard, so hard.
And shampoo, because shampoo I'm finished.*

The inability to work leaves people seeking asylum facing stigma and feeling like they are 'begging'. It distinguishes them as a marginalised 'other', the differing access to financial support only further separating them from the rest of the population. While people actively tried to counter this perception by presenting themselves in line with wider society's neoliberal values, as hard-working individuals who wish to find jobs, they cannot legally achieve this. Furthermore, the access to finance they do have is inadequate for meeting basic living costs.

In this section, I focused primarily on the effects of receiving, and being perceived as receiving, financial support from the government. Towards the end of the next section I will also highlight the additional stigma faced by those on Azure payment cards before considering the critical role charity plays in supporting those who are destitute. However, it is key to note that the stigma described here is based as much on perceptions as it is on the reality of someone's situation. Regardless of whether someone is seeking asylum or not, if they are perceived to be they could still face the same negative attitudes.

7.2 The Practices of Shopping

Shopping habits link to a range of spheres including economic wealth, social status and cultural norms. Who shops, what someone buys, how much they spend and where they go have long been understood as important parts of identity and are well-explored in literature on consumer culture (see for instance Miller, 1998, Jackson, 1999, Shields, 2003, Tomlinson and Larsen, 2003, Halter, 2007, Arnould and Thompson, 2015, Jubas, 2016). Culture is heavily interested in, and intertwined with, consumption, and shopping can become a cultural status symbol (Arnould and Thompson, 2015, Jubas, 2016). For many people in many parts of the world, it also becomes a leisure pursuit and social pastime, something we do for fun and enjoyment (Bäckström, 2011). It is not only the most common way we acquire the goods to meet basic needs, food, clothes and healthcare items, it can also be a key part in building a sense of self (Bäckström, 2011, Jubas, 2016).

For all my participants, having limited funds had changed the way they shopped:

Yes of course [my shopping habits have changed] a lot, because before I was working in Greece and I was buying everything I wanted, yes. For example, when you see something you like it you'll buy, you know, but from the time [...] I will never buy something because I like it anymore. If I go to town and I see something I will say, oh I like that one I will take it. No, now difficult, I every week I have a list what I need for the shopping, for example for the food, because the money is just a little bit.

(Sara)

Well obviously we're limited, your habits do change, you look at prices of everything it's difficult and I actually don't buy everything from one shop I've noticed, because I know that certain things are more cheaper in other shops...Not only food like cleaning products. I used to go to Home and Bargain and then I noticed in the market there's a little shop, where Home and Bargain I might spend £12 like every three months to buy these cleaning solutions and everything. Then I just found this place recently, they have the same exactly as that only cheaper. In the market I got everything for £8, it was like £4 you saved.

(Hiruni)

[Y]eah new uniform and everything is expensive. My sons is okay because they have the same colour but for the daughter she is secondary school, uniforms are quite expensive. It's stress. I have to save up, so I can't buy everything at once so last time jumpers for both of them, and next week, and week by week [...] by one by one. It's all we can do. It is different [to before the asylum system]. Because everything is limited for now. So it's quite difficult especially when there is extra costs of anything.

(Rashmi)

Due to the limited financial support people seeking asylum receive, all the women in my study were very careful as to what they spent, often going to more than one shop in order to find the best deal. Cox et al.'s (2005) study found bargain-hunting was one of the most enjoyable parts of shopping; however, the majority of my participants found shopping "difficult" and "stressful". This may be because they do not have a "plurality of possibilities" open to them; they do not have the element of choice that can be seen as essential for enjoying a shopping experience (Lehtonen and Mäenpää, 1997; 143, also see Cox et al., 2005, Bäckström, 2011). People are not shopping around because they

want to, but because they have to; this changes the experience from one of enjoyment to one of stress.

As the quotation from Rashmi above shows, not only would people need to plan in advance and budget for the weekly shop, but also plan for one-off expenses such as school uniforms, sometimes needing to spread the cost over several weeks. Tharushi also identified that some goods were cheaper to buy in bulk, but due to receiving asylum support weekly, she had to plan when she was going to buy each item, spreading the cost:

But I find if I buy the big size of rice the next week I buy five litre oil, it is really cheaper, because if I will buy one litre oil, it is £1.50 and five litres of oil is £3.50, so only £2 more, but it is enough for two months for me, or one and a half months for me.

Receiving money on a weekly basis often exacerbates financial pressures and tends to hit the less well-off hardest. It makes planning essential and it becomes difficult, or impossible, to make the most of cost reductions from bulk buying and supermarket offers.

Internet shopping is a growing phenomenon (Ruddick, 2015) and can be the cheapest way of buying certain types of goods with sites such as eBay, Gumtree and Amazon also offering access to cheap second-hand goods. Richardson (2015) has highlighted the potential of digital spaces to open up new sharing economies, where goods and services can be shared. However, she also notes their “seemingly paradoxical potential to both shake up and further entrench ‘business-as-usual’ in a variety of areas of economic activity” (Richardson, 2015; 127). These spaces are about access; while they can create communities of sharing, there can also be exclusionary practices as the performance of sharing is realised through access (Richardson, 2015). A small handful of my participants had internet at home and others had access to the internet at public libraries. However, internet shopping not only relies on having access to the internet but also a reasonable level of computer and English literacy in order to successfully navigate shopping sites. Furthermore, the majority of websites require access to a bank account in order to purchase goods. People seeking asylum are not normally able to open a bank account (Doyle, 2014, Basedow and Doyle, 2016), instead people on Section 95 support collect money from a local post office each week and many on Section 4 support are only allowed to use their Azure payment card (something I come to below). This makes internet shopping relatively inaccessible to people in the asylum system.

One of my participants, Tharushi, did, however, use Gumtree, a website where people can purchase second-hand goods. She was able to pay in cash when collecting items, offering her access to goods she could have otherwise not afforded:

[Y]ou know of Gumtree? I buy all of my things from Gumtree, it is the cheapest. Last time I bought one pushchair, I got my pushchair, it hasn't got a rain cover. In the summer it's okay I take her without rain cover and I was looking and then another pushchair I bought with the cover, only for £10, otherwise it is £100 or something. All the things I buy in Gumtree.

When Tharushi discussed shopping on Gumtree, she was more enthusiastic than when talking about shopping generally. She was excited to tell me about Gumtree's existence and more dynamic when explaining to me, and showing me, the goods she has purchased from there. In some ways, this online shopping had opened up, to some extent at least, a "plurality of possibilities", allowing her to better enjoy the shopping experience, and access more second-hand goods (Lehtonen and Mäenpää, 1997; 143, also see Cox et al., 2005, Bäckström, 2011). However, her excitement did not come without the awareness that she could only purchase goods that were close enough for her to collect on foot and pay for in cash. Furthermore, Tharushi was the only one of my participants to talk about online shopping; when I mentioned it to others, most dismissed it, explaining that they did not have access to the internet or that "you need a bank account", highlighting their exclusion from this practice. Here, we see through rules and challenges around accessing bank accounts and the 'digital divide' (Graham, 2011, Graham et al., 2012); people in the asylum system become excluded from digital practices of shopping and associated communities.

Having little money, experiencing shopping as stressful and being excluded from its potential in developing symbolic capital can also be seen more widely in the lives of impoverished people. Here, though it is integrated with immigration regimes, it can be seen as a deliberate policy to exclude people from these practices. Indeed, aiming to rehabilitate prisoners and better integrate them into society after release, the government is promoting and supporting schemes to help prisoners set up bank accounts. This is because bank accounts are seen as a "fundamental necessity of modern life and therefore resettlement" (Base, 2015). However, here, the government's policy has the opposite effect, limiting people's access to bank accounts and therefore making

it hard for them to integrate (Doyle, 2014, Basedow and Doyle, 2016). When Richardson (2015; 127) referred to online spaces' ability to entrench "business-as-usual", she was referring to economic practices of capital. Here, we see that shopping, whether online or not, becomes an exclusionary practice that further embeds the 'business-as-usual' work of the state in producing people seeking asylum as outsiders. They are deliberately denied the ability to "restore normal routines" facing barriers to integration (Hynes, 2011; 31).

7.2.1 Azure Payment Cards and Cashlessness

With the exception of those with children, most people on Section 4 are not provided with cash and are instead given an Azure payment card that is topped up automatically every week (Home Office, 2015b). For those on an Azure payment card, there are additional limitations to shopping. It cannot be used to buy alcohol, tobacco, vehicle fuel or gift cards and is only accepted at a limited selection of shops: Tesco, Boots, Sainsbury's, the Co-op, Mothercare, Asda, Morrisons, Iceland, the British Red Cross and the Salvation Army Stores (Home Office, 2015c), with a report from the Red Cross finding that even at these stores, the card is sometimes not accepted (Carnet et al., 2014). The report went on to state that some people have to walk long distances to supermarkets that may not be the nearest, cheapest or offer culturally appropriate foods, leaving people hungry and unable to eat (Carnet et al., 2014, also see Reynolds, 2010). Furthermore, the Red Cross found cashlessness resulted in people having no way to pay for transport, making attending appointments 'a huge problem', and the card caused unnecessary suffering and 'stigma' especially at checkouts (Carnet et al., 2014, also see Reynolds, 2010).

While only one of my participants, Nadia, was on an Azure payment card during the study, her experiences seem to agree with these findings. She found that the Azure payment card did not allow her to shop in the cheapest shops and that sometimes, while there may have been a shop nearby, it tended to be the smaller stores that were more expensive and did not have access to culturally-appropriate foods:

Sometimes like me I'm from Africa, I cannot buy my African food, go to like Tesco and this, they don't sell African food, [...] Sometimes you like buy colourful fruits, the one you want in the market or in the shops, but you cannot get them [at Tesco]. [...] I cannot get my African food. [...] that is the main problem.

When meeting Nadia for an appointment one day she was over an hour late because she had had to walk to the post office and back in order to pick up a missed parcel. I asked

her if she often had to walk long distances for appointments and other tasks and she explained to me that for her there was, in her words:

This card you know like you cannot buy bus pass. No other way, I have high blood pressure. It's hard, not good even to get to the shop sometimes.

Planning for shopping also became harder on an Azure payment card. A maximum of five pounds would roll over from one week to the next, with any other unspent money being lost (Carnet et al., 2014); Nadia could not spread the cost of more expensive items over several weeks, which limited her ability to plan and purchase things like winter coats. This resulted in many of the tactics available to the other women in my study, such as carefully selecting which shops to go to and planning shopping over several weeks, not being available to those on Azure payment cards. Furthermore, Nadia went on to explain that shops insisted on having the exact money on the card and would often not accept her combining it with other payment methods.

£4 left there like this £10 card, [...] so when I go to Asda I give them the card, then I give the £1 and I say I want credit, it's for mobile. You know sometimes when you miss, when I saw your missed call I will not be able to call you back because I don't have credit. [...] I wanted to buy credit and put in my mobile, but £4 is in the card, I have £1 cash to put it on top of the card, they said no.

There has been a move in society away from cash towards online transactions and contactless payment cards (Thomas et al., 2013, Bátiz-Lazo and Efthymiou, 2016), with 'cashlessness' being sold as a more convenient, luxury or easier way of life (London, 2014, Angleton, 2016, Visa, 2017). In some refugee camps, cards are being used to open up choices to people and prevent them having to queue for food (see BTCA, 2014, Issue, 2016, Pymnts, 2017)⁷. However, the situation seems to be reversed with Azure payment cards as they close off options and limit where and how someone can shop.

Furthermore, when talking about cashlessness, it needs to be recognised we are only talking about use of physical money, not a lack of access to money (Akinola, 2012). While

⁷ To my knowledge academic research has not looked at the impact of these cards. Most information comes from the corporations and banks involved in the projects. Given the findings around the use of Azure payment cards in the UK, a potentially important avenue for further research could be the use and effects of cards and cashlessness in refugee camps.

“electronic cash is a system which allows individuals to purchase goods or services in today’s society without the exchange of anything tangible, the term money still exists” (Akinola, 2012; 54). Money may take a more electronic form, but it still underwrites these payment methods (Akinola, 2012). A payment device (whether that is a bank card, Oyster card or Azure payment cards, or other device such as our watches or phones) is only a viable payment method when it has money associated with it. If not, they are simply pieces of plastic, watches or phones. What is more, if the form of money is not accepted or if it is only accepted when it is not combined with other forms, then its value diminishes. The Azure payment holds no value in a shop that does not accept it and, as Nadia found, the four pounds she had on her card could not be combined with one pound in cash, again diminishing its usability.

Finally, it is important to note that our society is far from being fully cashless (Thomas et al., 2013). As seen above, it was the access to cash that allowed Tharushi to use Gumtree (although access to a bank account would have been even more beneficial) and Nadia’s experiences reflect the challenges of trying to shop and move around the city without access to cash (also see Reynolds, 2010, Carnet et al., 2014). In the UK today, cash still underpins many day-to-day purchases, accounting for around half of all UK consumer transactions (Payments, 2016), with many public transport systems and cheaper shopping options (such as small payments in local shops and charity shops) being reliant on cash. While cashlessness is sold as convenient, it is only a convenience when it is accepted everywhere or/and a choice that we can use alongside cash as needed, something that is certainly not the case for those using Azure payment cards.

When people are in the asylum system, shopping becomes “*difficult*” and “*stressful*” as people are subject to different rules and regulations around finance, not only in terms of their access to welfare but also, as this section has shown, their access to wider financial practices and processes (also see Chapter 2). People seeking asylum face exclusionary practices that are affected by their socio-legal status. This can not only make it difficult to meet basic needs but can also limit someone’s ability to engage in or gain symbolic capital from the act of shopping and associated access to material goods. This in turn may affect their deeper sense of self, who they are and how they fit into society (Jubas, 2016, Arnould and Thompson, 2015). It reinforces their condition as being not only precarious but, as it is affected by immigration regimes, hyper-precarious – both in the everyday practical sense but also in terms of their human condition (of their sense of self).

7.3 Charity, an Emotional 'Shopping' Practice

Given the limited access to finance and associated challenges outlined above, it is unsurprising that charities end up playing a role in helping people meet their basic needs (Mayblin and James, 2017). In Leeds, there is an extensive range of charities providing services to people seeking asylum, including, but not limited to, emergency and longer term accommodation, free lunches, legal, welfare and emotional support and access to free clothes, food and personal items such as sanitary towels (see LASSN, 2016). However, as this section will show, receiving charity is not always a simple process and while often necessary, it is not void of emotion.

The charity sector is particularly vulnerable to economic change in downturn as it often has very few cash reserves and unlike many private companies, most charities live hand-to-mouth (Clark, 2009). Since the economic downturn, the third sector has also seen cuts due to decreases in funding from local authorities, with organisations located in and supporting more deprived local communities disproportionately affected (Morris and Barr, 2013, Mayblin and James, 2017, Jones et al., 2015). The wider cuts to funding, as well as the cuts to legal aid, have had a particular impact on charities that provide (as part or all of their mission) legal support, including support to people seeking asylum (Morris and Barr, 2013). Indeed, when I first started this research, charities were needing to quickly adapt as one of the largest asylum support charities in the city did not have its contract renewed. This section therefore needs to be read in the context of underfunded, overstretched services, with some services closing altogether.

With no access to public funds or right to work, charitable organisations are often the only legal means of survival for those who are destitute (British Red Cross, 2013, Cuthill et al., 2013). Two of my participants, Nadia and Barkisu, were destitute at some point during the course of the research. Both women found shelter through a local charity, and at different times were placed in shared women-only accommodation in a nearby city. The charity also provided a food parcel each week, ten pounds in cash and paid for bus fares to medical and asylum appointments. This accommodation and support allowed both women to survive, albeit at a subsistence level, and be safe. It also provided shelter and respite from the problems of destitution (see Chapter 6). However, it did require them to move city which they both told me had a negative impact on their mental health

and made it difficult or impossible to stay in contact with friends and organisations in Leeds.

While for those who are destitute charity may be the only legal option, when talking about shopping with all of my participants, acquiring particular goods from charity was intertwined with the conversations as though part of their regular shopping habits. For instance, here Tharushi is discussing things she acquires for her children. Tharushi moves quickly between things she has bought and things she acquired for free, whilst also clearly distinguishing things she does not get from charity:

Yes, these things I am buying but little big things, these blocks, these things [Local asylum woman's group] they offer, yes that's also how I got some toys. And in market all them are second hand things, not new. If I buy these things around £15 to £20, but in market £1, £2 I buy second hand things...I don't take clothes items from [asylum group] or women's group because I am scared about rashes. I take books, sometimes 25p like these books I got, and sometimes [from the asylum group] I take some small books and some toys and sometimes shoes. Shoes I am washing only.

People who are destitute have little to no choice but to receive almost everything, including clothes and food from charity; however, those who have access to some government support do have an element of choice. What people would and would not take from charity varied according to the individual. Some of the women would happily get anything they needed from charity, while other people would only acquire clothes for adults and others would only take things such as toys and books for children. Here, Tharushi makes clear what she will and will not take; she worries about “rashes” and wants to ensure I know that she does not purchase clothes and “washes” the shoes she takes.

The act of receiving goods from charity is a complex and emotional process. Using charity can be stigmatised (Fothergill, 2003), with goods from charity, particularly second-hand ones, sometimes linked with ideas of ‘uncleanliness’ (Roux, 2006). This is because ‘concern[s] about contamination’ are linked to ‘certain type[s] of items, especially those worn next to the skin’ (Roux, 2006; 29 also see, O’Reilly et al., 1984). Here, we can see Tharushi reflecting these attitudes, she will not take things to wear and she washes shoes, drawing a line around the personal space of the body. Furthermore, her keenness to draw

out a distinction between what she will and will not take also suggests she is concerned with what I may think. People have preconceived ideas around 'who' receives charity. When studying women's responses to accessing charity after disasters, Fothergill (2003; 675) found middle class women, while "greatly appreciat[ing] the generosity of others [...] profoundly disliked the feeling of accepting charity" and often felt uncomfortable and embarrassed about needing help. This was because they would project their own, often subconscious, negative views of those that received charity onto themselves. The women in my study may have worried that by accepting charity, they may be perceived by myself and others as 'unclean' or be feeding into stereotypes of the 'lazy', poor or 'burdensome' 'asylum seeker' discussed above (Sales, 2002, Fothergill, Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008, Wiggan, 2012, Darling, 2016).

As Waite and Lewis (2017; 967) note, "gift exchanges are replete with power relations" and in the asylum system, people can often feel "worthy *only* of charitable responses", finding themselves as passive recipients of care rather than active and visible partners (Darling, 2011b; 408 emphasis added). To be the "rightful claimant to support" is something qualitatively very different than being a "recipient that simply receives a gift from a generous person" (Korf, 2007; 375). It can not only further feed in to the guest and host dynamic (see Chapter 6) but as Hiruni explains, taking goods from charity can involve needing to change one's self-perception and deal with uncomfortable feelings of pride and embarrassment:

Hiruni: Getting used to second-hand items being given to you was hard at the beginning, it makes more sense now for me, like I don't mind if I find something good from the groups. Sometimes I just go for the group maybe there might be something good that I can get, or something that will fit me, like even this dress I think I got from the group, though it's small the sleeves are short but no one notices it if I push it up (laughs).

Emma: *So why was that hard at first?*

Hiruni: I don't know maybe pride, I wasn't used to it, yes, [...] I guess what we're used to and trying to accept. [...] It's just getting used to living, I don't know, being thankful instead of being, I don't know, I've come across women who feel entitled and come across men as well, it's like in the process, who feel like they should give it. Whereas I feel embarrassed to take, you know? It's quite even taking clothes, not that I wouldn't wear it, also it just felt embarrassing, just asking, it's like going for one thing and if they

don't give me my travel I wouldn't ask, like at the beginning I wouldn't ask. But once I got used to the place and I see other people doing it and asking, I would get comfortable with one person to ask but if the other person isn't there I would wait till the week after to go and ask person who I know. [...] it's embarrassing asking.

Hiruni's comment that "*no one notices*" her dress is a little short shows she is concerned with what others may think; this is further highlighted when she is talking about her discomfort at having to ask people, particularly new people, to be reimbursed for her travel. Prior to seeking asylum, in participant one's own words, she lived a relatively "*privileged*" life, had a housekeeper and could purchase the goods she wanted. Accepting charity is something that Hiruni had to "*get used to*" and try "*to accept*". It was not something that simply happened, but an active – and uncomfortable – process by which she had to shift her self-positioning from someone who was able to give to others to someone that took from charity. She had to learn to become the passive recipient of a gift from 'generous' others (Korf, 2007, Darling, 2011b).

All the women in my study utilised charity. Those who were destitute relied on it, while others used it as part of their regular 'shopping' habits, a key way of acquiring essential goods. However, as I have illustrated, this was not necessarily a simple process, because people could feel stigmatised or embarrassed. While charity may be a way of coping with the practical elements of the financially precarious situation the asylum system produces, and even become seen as a 'shopping' practice, it can be emotionally complex. It can make someone feel uncomfortable and involve shifting their perception of self; thus while reducing everyday precarity, it may also bring to the fore people's ontological precarity. As such, a tension between the two forms of precarity can be seen as the act of coping with, and potentially improving, the physical condition can worsen feelings of ontological insecurity.

7.4 Trying to Save

While charity does provide some things people need, there are other items people do not wish to or cannot acquire from charity. Small items can often be purchased weekly but, as discussed above, larger items require careful saving and planning. For those on Azure payment cards or who are destitute, saving for goods is simply not an option and people would have to go without these items. For those receiving some form of cash support, saving could and would occur, but often not without sacrifice. In this section, I explore in

more depth the process of planning and saving, looking at the practicalities, sacrifices and challenges that come with it.

Hear Tharushi illustrates the level of planning needed to purchase relatively essential items:

[I]n this G4S home they gave one broom, but my baby got sick, continuously she got sick because of this dust and I save money, a lot of money and I within two months I bought vacuum machine [..]. Little bit more I restricted some foods also for us; we didn't buy meat and anything, only vegetables because we want to save money for the vacuum machine and we bought. Because when it is too much essential, even the food items also we control a little bit and if it is really needed we buy it [...] Monthly, monthly, monthly we saved, five, five, five, five pounds like that and we bought a hoover because it's needed for my small one otherwise it's dusty. She's getting sick and sneezing, that's why we bought it.

People seeking asylum are paid weekly, and with no right to work and most having no access to bank accounts, things cannot be bought on credit; therefore, the only way to buy more expensive items is to save slowly over time by putting away a small amount of money each week. Furthermore, in order to save up sufficient funds to buy essentials, such as a hoover, people decreased the amount they spent on food.

So it's basically like when I need something I just tell my mum [Krishma], like it's summer coming or winter is coming we need this, so we just basically save some money up, like she knows like now they need something so we can eat less and then we can save some money up then they can buy stuff.

(Noor)

Eating less and limiting diet in order to ensure other material needs are met may seem quite a drastic or extreme step to take; however, it was often said in a matter-of-fact way as part of a bigger statement. This may be because it is not uncommon for those seeking asylum to need to reduce their food in order to purchase other things. Indeed a recent study found that some destitute people seeking asylum “face a daily struggle to survive”, with their diet “comparable to pre-Welfare State deprivation” (Collins et al., 2015; unpagged). While some things may seem extraordinary or extreme, they can become mundane and ordinary when they are lived in people's day-to-day lives (Ashforth and

Kreiner, 2002). Research has noted that “practice and performance emphasises that the skills we employ in the everyday making of space and place are full of affective forces and improvisatory resources that allow us to carry on” (Binnie et al., 2007; 517). Something stops being treated as extraordinary because it becomes part of our everyday practices that we learn in order to ‘get by’ (Binnie et al., 2007).

In this context, when there is not enough money to buy all the essential goods, decisions about what to save for and how to save may be viewed as an ordinary part of day-to-day life but are nonetheless an important part of daily life. It is not, as Thrift (2000; 274) asserts, something that “go[es] unnoticed in the background of our lives”, but rather an active conscious process where difficult choices have to be made. The below conversation with Tharushi highlights this need to make choices and prioritise certain things:

***Emma:** Is it difficult to buy things like winter coats and things that do cost a little bit more?*

***Tharushi:** Yes, save up for a few weeks, if I think really, I need something a little bit valuable it will take time, for three weeks I will save money and only then... jackets and everything I can buy in Primark, you know so I save money for three weeks and then I buy.*

***Emma:** Have you found that’s made it more difficult being here for longer and not just having to buy like just the basics like food and stuff that are cheap?*

***Tharushi:** Basic food is okay. The jackets and everything because my jacket is too old now, the things are coming out like that, so I really want to buy one jacket for me. From last month also I am thinking to buy one jacket so five pounds, five pounds, five pounds, a way I am saving, maybe next, this is two months, maybe next month I will buy one jacket for me, it’s £25. Always I am going to Primark and I am touching and I going and touching it, that one I want a lot but maybe next week I will collect the money only. Here clothes are really expensive. Here it’s expensive and I want to buy, look and I like to buy one clothes, I want to think two or three times. I touch, I take and I put in the basket and again, no, no, I take and keep again, (laughs) Because it’s too expensive, Primark is only the place little bit. Normally when I go to the shopping and I take for me and I go to the children’s section and I take for my child and money is difficult and don’t keep my thing and buy for baby.*

Tharushi cannot purchase something for herself and for a child and so the child's needs tend to come first. Even with careful planning and saving, she is having to make a decision about what to buy.

Just over a month later I revisited Tharushi:

Emma: I think you told me last time about the coat?

Tharushi: Still in Primark (laughs).

Emma: Yes, you're saving for that still?

Tharushi: I saved and something, next surprise expense coming and spending, still not have. Because our Hoover broken and we went to the Argos and that model we bought is not there, so we had to spend another £10 extra. Yes, £10, £15 for the bus to get everything. And my small one got this buggy, but I hadn't got the winter rain cover, otherwise she will get cold.

Despite trying to save, she had still not purchased the coat. "Surprise expenses" had made it difficult for her to save and she constantly had to prioritise other things. For those at or near the poverty line, unexpected expenditure can push them into debt. As people seeking asylum are not normally able to access borrowing from the bank, getting into debt was often not an option. If they did not have the money they could simply not purchase things. Research into other groups that struggled to get hold of money for emergencies through traditional methods such as bank loans, highlighted that loan sharks can sometimes seem to be the only option (Signal et al., 2012); however, none of my participants talked about the use of loan sharks. Instead, people would go without or see if they could get assistance from friends or charity, with all the related complexities (Chapter 8, Korf, 2007, Darling, 2011b, Waite and Lewis, 2017).

Not only would things breaking cause unexpected costs but, as she went on to explain, with no other way of accessing money moments of emergency or crisis would require forward planning to ensure she had cash:

Every week normally we put [money aside] so any reason if baby gets sick we want for the taxi and something, not £10, £20 we put. [...] because one- night she [her 3 year old] got sick and we called to the emergency and they took us and when we're coming we want to spend for the taxi. That day that experience made us to save, even £20.

While this example draws from Tharushi's experiences, all of my participants who had Section 95 support, and Sara (who due to having a child had cash support through Section 4) also all tried to save a few pounds every week for emergencies and unexpected expenses. Unexpected expenses included things like buying non-prescription medicines, paying the taxis or buses to hospital or doctor appointments if they became too sick to travel by foot and money for phone credit or to pay for transport to visit legal advisers, court or the Home Office if they were flung into a moment of 'crisis' related to their case (see Chapter 5). Rashmi explains:

[W]e have only limited money. So we have to do everything we can very carefully. We have to keep some in case tomorrow we have to go to London for our case, or we have to go to a solicitor [...] I have to save up, so I can't buy everything at once [...] Because everything is limited for now. So it's quite difficult especially when there is extra costs of anything.

Flung into moments of crisis, whether through something changing on their case or because they had a physical need such as a medical emergency, had both temporal (see Chapter 5) but also practical consequences for the women in my study. Their precarious financial situation, the lack of certainty and access to finance, as well as their exclusion from normal financial institutions placed the women in a situation where they often had to choose between essentials. Even with careful planning and saving, something breaking or an emergency would result in having to make difficult decisions about what was important. Things essential to 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998) would come above other seemingly essential items such as warm winter clothes. Due to their hyper-precarious situation this meant not only prioritising things linked to health, but also responding to the Home Office, and engaging in activities linked to their asylum case - To also try and reduced the risk, and associated harm, of destitution, detainment or deportation. In these moments then, we can see an important interplay between the two types of precarity. The precarious financial situation of those in the UK asylum system places people in a situation where they struggle to know if they will be able to save for and afford all the things they need to survive. Through this ontological precarity is brought to the fore, a person is made to think about what is really essential for their 'bare life'; they come to know the fragility of their human existence (Butler, 2006, 2016).

7.5 Deciding What to Buy When

As I have explored, shopping and saving for non-essential items is generally not an option. However, my research highlighted that this was not the only factor that prevented people in the asylum system acquiring certain items. Indeed, Sara explicitly said:

I don't have no reason even like to buy, even if I had the money, you know I will not buy things.

Here I explore why people do not buy things, arguing that this is not just about lack of financial means but is also to do with their mobility and precarious temporality.

When Hiruni was discussing purchasing a radiator, she stated that the first year she was here “it was frozen and I kept on saying no, there’s no need to buy anything, don’t buy a heater, don’t buy a heater, there’s no need”, not buying a heater until the following year. During the first winter she could have saved to purchase the heater and it would have enhanced her wellbeing, but she chose not to. I asked whether the asylum system had affected her decision-making process when it came to purchasing goods:

Totally, no it has. It took me a year, after a year I bought the heater and the cover for the sofa. I never used to sit on the sofa, hardly ever because it’s so disgusting, right and I just, you know this waiting process where you think oh you’re going to hear now, you know and I see people moving when they hear and all the things are like scattered somewhere until they get the housing. Slowly I got plastic drawers, like during Christmas this year I was like, got one just to put away his socks, you know just to have, two years now, two years and six months and we’re just living with nothing really.

For Hiruni, the link between their socio-legal status and resulting housing in security (see Chapter 6) meant she did not purchase goods. She does not actively buy things to make the accommodation ‘homely’ or even purchase goods that would enhance the quality of life, instead choosing to live “with nothing really”. This is further reflected in the two conversations below, where both the women highlight that their attitudes to shopping have changed:

I am thinking why do we go and buy anything because if I spend too much, if I have to leave the way again. So I am a little yes every day and buying only things that are essential.

(Rashmi)

Yes [I have a different relationship with things] all of this grabbing, I had shoes, when I had these options I had five to ten pairs, yes like that. But now I keep only two pairs, one is for summer I bought and one is for winter, I got from the woman's group, only two pairs now though. And now I don't feel that I want something to buy, it's like, no good to buy. I don't want to keep lots of stuffs with me. If I have a lot of stuff it is a headache, we have to keep, in future what will happen, so this is a waste of money like that.

(Tharushi)

Firstly, the women only purchase essential things, limiting their possessions, because they do not wish to “waste money”. Secondly, as Tharushi explains, “it’s a headache” to have additional items with them if they suddenly have to move. Practically speaking, moving can be expensive, time-consuming and tiring, particularly when you have lots of material possessions. For people in the asylum system, moving could be particularly difficult as, even if someone receives leave to remain, they are unlikely to have the funds to hire a van or other moving equipment (see Doyle, 2014, Basedow and Doyle, 2016). If made destitute they are likely to have nowhere to go and if someone is suddenly detained or deported, they may only have a short period of time to pack and limited packing space (see Chapter 6).

However, this “headache” is about more than just the practicalities and challenges of moving. Noor relayed a conversation she would have with her mother, Krishma, around whether or not to buy material items such as a TV:

Noor: *[L]ike about TV and that kind of stuff, we don't buy that stuff, we just tell our mum [Krishma], I just always say mum think positive, don't think like [it could be ok], so that's what I say. But she [Krishma] sometimes thinks like we never know what they're going to do to us so it's not good to buy things like, so we can't even take them with us, so that's what she says, so we don't buy that kind of stuff.*

Emma: *Yes so it stops you collecting material things a bit?*

Noor: *Yes, wants to buy it so just like me and my mum sometimes sits and talks about it, like when we're going to get another house, we'll get this, we'll get this, and sometimes I just say like why can't get it now, like it's, if we just get a TV and stuff now, it made her [Krishma] think twice like if get it or not. Because she [Krishma] knows like we don't know like what they're going to do to us.*

The practicalities of moving may be part of the reason that, her mother, Krishma does not want to buy goods at present; however, what also comes across is the role uncertainty and not knowing about the future plays in the decision-making process. In her words “*we don’t know like what they’re going to do to us*”. They do not know whether they will stay, be moved within the UK or be deported. Walsh (2006) notes, in the lives of migrants, belonging and belongings are intertwined – here, we can see that for those in the UK asylum system, they do not feel a sense of belonging in the accommodation and so do not increase their belongings. Instead of purchasing things now in a time of instability, their mobility as well as their detainability, deportability and destitutability (Chapters 5 and 6) – their lack of ability to dictate the conditions of their life (Chapter 5) – causes them to focus on an imagined future where in “*another house*” they have stability.

In addition to the ‘uncertainty’ discourse, in several of the conversations there was also a discourse of loss, a fear of losing everything again. As discussed in Chapter 6, people seeking asylum have often not only left everything in the country of origin, but due to the asylum process itself may have had to leave goods and items purchased in the UK behind as well. The discourse of loss came across particularly strongly when talking to Barkisu and Rashmi, who had built lives for themselves in the UK before entering the asylum system.

When I had my first husband, I had a lot of stuff, when I was in Channel Island in Guernsey, I go on board the ship, I would buy stuff, I buy, you know, I like buying food stuff, you know, cooking but when I have this problem I have this stuff, so I leave everything there. So why should I go and buy stuff. I don’t know my status. I don’t know where I stand. You cannot be yourself until you know where you stand. It’s your stuff and stuff you’ve lost, you know. You buy them because you see them and you’ve lost them. If you go to my room, they give me TV. It’s like I appreciate it but there you know I have more than 50 inch in my apartment I have like, I have my land I love, my sofas, I have and this thing I saw I loved it and I buy them and losing them and they stop everything. It’s hard...They take it. You love your stuff. They take it from you because you don’t have the power, it’s not about the money because the money, well I have to stay, if I am lucky to have it, to stay here, I will make it back. It’s because, they have, because you are asylum seeker you don’t have but I want it.

(Barkisu)

The all the things we have in our house belongs to G4S. If we buy things and we don't know what happened to us next so maybe we have to leave here and move to somewhere else like that. We had that experience once so I don't want to it collect lots of stuff again because I will just have to leave it

(Rashmi)

In the conversation with Noor and Krishma, there is a hint of hope about an imagined future where they are stable and in a position to buy the things they want without fear that they will be forced to move or lose these items. Conversely, in conversations with Barkisu and Rashmi, who had both lost everything since being in the UK, there is a focus on loss and powerlessness. They seem deeply aware that at any time they could lose everything (again), the memory of the previous loss causing them to actively choose not to acquire things that they could lose.

As Papadopoulos (2002; 18) highlights, the loss of home and its material, sentimental and psychological elements has deeper consequences and can result in a “deep sense of a gap [...] a lack of confidence in one’s own existence and consequently in ‘reading life’ which leads to a particular kind of frozenness” (also see Papadopoulos, 2007). For those seeking asylum, this loss can occur multiple times in different ways, not only when fleeing persecution, but also when entering and moving around in the UK asylum system. This adds to a sense of precarious temporality, as not only can someone be moved at any time, but as a result, the material objects that help give a sense of familiarity and belonging to a space can also be lost. There is a lack of being able to hold on to physical belongings that in turn produces a deeper ontological precarity, affecting someone’s sense of belonging. There is an interplay here, then, between the two types of precariousness.

Previous losses of home and belongings, alongside someone’s mobility detainability, deportability and destitutability, “the revocability of the promise of the future” (Chapters 5 and 6, Coutin, 1991; 98, also see De-Genova, 2002), affects someone’s shopping habits. Their precarious temporality, the temporal uncertainty of their position, alongside the sense that their accommodation is not their own, results in people leaving houses relatively bare (Chapter 6) and keeping their personal possessions to a minimum. Their attitudes towards material goods changes, as people chose not to buy things that may enhance the quality of life or make the accommodation more ‘homely’, as it was felt to

be a waste of money, could cause potential hassle and risked loss. In effect, the unknowing of what was going to happen in the future created a deeper sense of ontological instability that in turn affected decisions around material and practical needs now. The deeper sense of precariousness caused people to not always want to, even in the limited ways available to them, improve the practical and physical elements of their precarious living conditions.

7.6 Conclusion

In Butler's (2006, 2016) work, she notes that, for her, *precariousness* is felt by all but that *precarity* is a particular vulnerability (often politically), imposed on the disenfranchised. For Watson, "[c]orporeal fragility both equalizes and differentiates: all bodies are menaced by suffering, injury, and death (precariousness), but some bodies are more protected and others more exposed (precarity)" (Watson, 2012; unpagged). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that there is a co-contingency between the two ways of experiencing and living in precarity drawn out in this thesis. If someone is living with precarity in the sense that they are unsure if and how they will meet their basic needs, then they have a 'precarity' in the Butler (2006, 2009, 2016) sense – a particular vulnerability. Thus it is hardly surprising they would be more likely to feel a deep sense of instability, and be aware of their human fragility (what Butler calls precariousness). However, what I have shown here is that there is a more complex interrelationship between the two, and while they may sometimes reinforce, or even produce each other, at other times there can be tensions between them. Let us look at each example in turn:

- Looking broadly at how the financial situation for those in the UK asylum system differs from the wider population and how this impacts shopping habits, I showed a link between how the two types of precarity – access to money and financial practices – can directly affect someone's sense of self and belonging. Going on in the section on saving to draw out the nature of this link further, I illustrated that when someone is in a financially precarious situation, and indeed if that situation worsens and becomes infused with immigration regimes, they need to think (ever-more carefully) about what really matters to survive and what the basics of their life really are. *Here, as one form of precarity increases, so too does the other.*

- In contrast, when I looked at how people use charities as a form of ‘shopping’ – a way to gain the goods needed to survive – I showed that due to the need to shift self-positioning this could increase ontological precarity. Therefore, while the act of accepting charity may have improved the material and practical elements of someone’s precarious situation, this would bring to the fore their vulnerability and potentially worsen their feelings of ontological insecurity. *This pulled out a tension between the two types of precariousness, as under these financial conditions both could not be improved simultaneously.*
- Finally, I looked at the impact that the practices and processes of the asylum system more broadly, particularly those around mobility, detainability, deportability and destitutability can have on people’s choices about what to buy. In so doing, I showed that the deeper sense of precariousness brought about by someone’s precarious temporality (enacted through immigration regimes), causes people to actively choose not to improve their physical living situation. *The production of one type of precarity (a deep instability) produced conditions whereby people actively chose not to improve the physical conditions of their life.*

In this chapter I have begun to address the gap in the literature around the shopping and saving practices of those in the UK asylum system, looking specifically at how people practically, emotionally and ontologically navigate this precarious financial landscape. Through this, the chapter also adds to theoretical understandings of precarity. It highlights that a dual approach to precarity is not only useful in providing a fuller understanding of the condition(s) of life in the UK asylum system, but that when we utilise this approach we need to do so with an awareness that while they are constitutive of each other their interrelationships can vary.

Up until this point of the thesis, I have looked at how people are made to wait in the asylum process, how a precarious temporality is produced and what life is like under the resulting conditions. However, people are acting agents, as this chapter has shown; they can make conscious choices as to how and if they improve the conditions of their life. In the final empirical chapter, I turn to talk back at the work so far and to show that while people may be made to wait, and while in many ways they cannot dictate the conditions of their waiting (they cannot suddenly change the laws and governmental practices around asylum), they can to some degree choose what to do while they wait. Then, in the

conclusion, I further elaborate on the idea of dual precariousness used in this thesis, showing how it fits in with wider work on precarity. I also briefly outline the worsening financial situation for those seeking asylum, suggesting some ways in which this situation could be improved.

Chapter 8: Doing Waiting

As people wait in the asylum process, they do not wait passively. People go shopping, attend appointments, take their children to school, join groups, go to education classes and socialise with friends. The rhythms and routines of daily life may be altered, someone's behaviour may be modified but, the government, nor any other body, can have absolute power to dictate the terms of their waiting (Bourdieu, 2000). Power is not top down but the "interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault, 1978; 94, in Macleod and Durrheim, 2002; 44). Indeed, governmentality "pertains to governance as an art because people are free agents" with the capacity to direct their life (Ettlinger, 2007; 333, also see Foucault, 1991, Gordon, 1991). Therefore, this chapter will provide a different reading of this time of waiting, drawing out the ways people 'do waiting'. Rather than see waiting as a purely passive activity, as being 'made to wait' in a "time orientated by others" (Bourdieu, 2000; 237), I look at the possibility of waiting being something we do as acting agents. In so doing, I do not assert that every instance should be read as resistance, as Katz (2004; 242) puts it, "[w]e cannot understand oppositional practice or its possible effects if we consider every autonomous act to be an instance of resistance". Rather, I look at how people 'do waiting', teasing apart and drawing out the oppositional natures of this practice (Katz, 2004). To do this, the chapter draws on several areas of work already mentioned in this thesis, including ideas of governmentality, precarity and temporal power to argue that those who are waiting in the asylum system are not passive, but rather, do waiting in ways that can open up possibilities even as it creates frustration (Jeffrey, 2011, 2010).

This chapter intentionally builds upon the rest of the thesis so, alongside new material, I deliberately take many of the topics previously mentioned and address them from different angles, focusing on activities that were of particular importance to the women. Firstly, I consider how support groups play a role in consciousness-raising and act as spaces of "matrices of care and mutual aid" (Katz, 2004; 246), providing practical and emotional support. Secondly, I look at wider networks of friends, focusing on how friendships with UK citizens, while uneven, can help people cope with the precarities of

the asylum system. Thirdly, I examine the roles education and volunteering can play in helping people create a sense of purpose and potentially even disrupt the temporality of (seemingly) endless waiting. Finally, I turn to the experiences of some of the women to show the importance of not reducing people to their position as ‘asylum seekers’, drawing out some examples of how people not only ‘survive’ in this time of waiting but can, momentarily, thrive. Through doing this, in this chapter, I take Jeffrey’s (2010, 2011) idea of ‘timepass’ and apply it to a situation that is not only about ‘temporal rupture’ but is also about ‘temporal power’. I show how people in the asylum system not only ‘hang’ “on the awaited decision” (Bourdieu, 2000; 228), but actively negotiate this time of waiting. Thus, I address not only how people can ‘do waiting’, as Jeffrey (2010, 2011) does but, also how in doing waiting, people can, in limited ways, challenge the exertion of temporal power - of being made to wait “in a time orientated by others” (Bourdieu, 2000; 237).

8.1 Asylum Support Groups: Places of Consciousness Raising

There is a wide variety of organisations that people seeking asylum may engage with (see LASSN, 2016, also see Chapter 7). While these work within a landscape of reducing resources, they can still play an important role in supporting people, and include organisations specifically set up for people seeking asylum, as well as more general services such as mental health support, youth groups or housing advice (Tyler, 2012, Mayblin and James, 2017). As asylum groups and organisations were my primary point of access for recruitment, it is unsurprising all the women in my study attended at least one group, with many women engaging with a broad range of organisations and services. While this may not be the experience of all women who are seeking asylum, for my participants the groups played a central role in their lives, helping them cope with the asylum system. As this section will explain, the groups not only supported these women to meet their material needs (Chapters 6 and 7), but provided practical and emotional support and friendship.

The primary reason women in my study tended to attend a drop-in was if they had a specific concern they wished to discuss. For example, caseworkers would help the women fill in forms to register with the GP, or understand the U.K.’s health and/or school system. These organisations were particularly important both in moments of ‘crisis’, for instance to help people navigate the complex asylum system (see Chapters 2 and 5), but also for

accessing everyday services. For those with little English, advice services can be particularly important as correspondence from the Home Office and most other official bodies is in English (see Chapter 5). However, services often also added an additional, less formal service as they became social places:

[I]f I sit home sometimes it's so stressful, that's why we have there, meet friends, go and interact, then come back. [...] we are the same people. [...] they understand.[...]every day I go [...] yes it's only Sunday we rest.

(Nadia)

Furthermore, many groups were also deliberately set up to be 'relaxed' spaces where people could talk to each other, share information and build friendships. Even though some of these groups did not have designated caseworkers, the organisers, volunteers and other people seeking asylum often still provided practical support and help, as Noor explained:

[T]hey just like, umm, they tell them to learn something, like they told them to learn English and they help them to get to know each other, there to make friends and like, all that [...] she's [Krishma] saying like they support her and she can make new friends, and they tell her not to worry if you need anything like any letters or anything for the Home Office will help you with that.

The support in these groups not only came from the volunteers, but from the other people seeking asylum. As Tharushi explains below, having people that share your life experiences can be important in both coping and learning to respond to precarities (Keating, 2005).

***Tharushi:** I'm going to the woman's group, it is also really nice, lots of nice people are there. And I think talking about same problems with the person is good, if someone is having another problem, even if I'm having another problem, then talking about that it is like useful like. In the woman's group they're also waiting people for asylum, I also waiting for asylum, so talking about it with them and they are telling, don't worry, you will get and I am telling with her, don't worry you will get. Like say we're talking like the same problem. Have you got me?*

Emma: Yes, and do sometimes people like they can sort of say, oh you should go here or have you tried this?

Tharushi: Yes because I went there and [one of the women] told us near our signing centre there is a place, we are going there and we are signing and we are telling them now we are going to sign. If something happened they will do something to take us from the...if go for detention or something. [...] so going to the woman's group they're giving lots of information.

As such, the way the women used the groups to support each other and share experiences can be seen as a form of consciousness building (Keating, 2005). The women could talk about their day-to-day lives and through this, come to common understandings (Anonymous, 1975). They could turn “to what each woman could know and trust —her own thoughts, feelings, and experiences” (Keating, 2005; 87, also see Sarachild, 1978). The members shared experiences of their lives of ‘precarity’ (Butler, 2006, 2009, 2016). The conversations at the groups would often turn to talk about the practical elements of being in this precarious situation: food, housing and navigating the rules of the asylum system. This can help build shared consciousness, and become a rallying point for resistance (Waite, 2009, Standing, 2016). However, the groups also provided spaces of emotional support, and through this, people could reduce their feelings of isolation, they could feel valued and a sense of belonging, they could increase their ontological security. As Lorey (2015; unpagged) highlights, through the precarious sharing their experiences they can also “recognise [their] existential vulnerability”, which can, under some circumstances, provide an “affirmative basis for politics”.

Katz (2004; 256) notes that “[i]n this process of becoming – of consciousness raising – a non-dominant group does not simply recognize the conditions and social relations producing them as such, but also the means through which these social relations are obscured or naturalized in their society. With this awareness can come the realization of the need for resistance, for undoing these uneven power relations and undermining the means through which they are set in motion and enforced”. While through the act of consciousness building the women in my study may have had an awareness of their position, they were still invested in ‘the game’ (Bourdieu, 2000; 229-30) – the asylum system (see Chapter 5). They may have seen a need for resistance, but they did not act to fully undermine the process, rather the majority of the acts were more what Katz (2004; 246) calls acts of resilience. That is, they produced “matrices of care and mutual aid”, that helped sustain them, but also “supported the general trajectory of the

developments that necessitated these acts in the first place". The acts did not change the asylum system, indeed they caused people to continue engaging (and waiting) in it, legitimatising the system, but they did improve the women's ability to navigate that system. However, in some moments the groups also created the conditions for acts of reworking (Katz, 2004; 247), as the women would retool "themselves as political subjects and social actors". They were not passive but actively learning from each other and developing the skill set needed to change their precarious condition(s).

The importance of these networks and this kind of peer support in helping to rework the system can perhaps best be seen in Sara's experience of support when she was detained. The women at the group, along with a friend who was a UK citizen (see below), helped contact her lawyer, put her in contact with an asylum advice group and some turned up at court while her lawyer was working to stop her being deported. They also worked with her and Leeds No Borders, an explicitly political group (see Anonymous, 2017) to look at other options such as a public campaign to contact the airport should the court hearing not work. Sara explained to me afterwards that:

... I feel love from everyone, I feels it, you know all the people my phone never stopped ringing, you know. And I was feeling like everyone wanted to know about me and they were looking after to help me [...] I'd been arrested because when I'd been arrested I had so much support, around me, people calling me. I feel like I have a big family here when I'd been arrested [...]

The support continued for Sara after her release, when she was again refused asylum:

... after the refusal for the appeal you can go to fresh claim, I didn't know that. I learnt this from the woman's group, the Home Office did not tell all this, you know after when you get the second refusal you can have a fresh claim. ... I go to groups, I was crying and the women said to me no, you need find again a new lawyer, you need to hope, you know you need to make a fresh claim. I said what is a fresh claim, you know because I thought in myself everything finished, they said fresh claim when you start again of something new, you know. And they said to me you need to find a lawyer, ... [the women know] lot of information, things you never don't know because they are here for a long time, some people are waiting for six years, five years you know and they know better than me, they know what is good, what you need to go there. They have problems

you have. Me I didn't know anyway, I didn't know like it was existing, the fresh claim.

The other participants at the group not only played an important role in supporting her through a difficult time and giving her practical advice, they also acted when she was detained. In so doing, they may not have challenged the existence of the system itself, as would need to be done for resistance (Katz, 2004; 243); rather, they “operated on the same plane”, as the problem was experienced and explicitly recognised the problematic conditions and focused in a pragmatic way on responding to them (Katz, 2004; 247). As such, the groups not only produced spaces of care and mutual aid, improving people’s resilience, which “itself is an achievement” (Katz, 2004; 246), they also opened up the spaces for small acts of reworking. The women would not simply passively wait, but rather they would support each other through the process and learn how to respond to it.

The examples above, and indeed most of the examples of women engaging in mutual aid, were from women-specific groups. In examining the potential of groups to create spaces for sharing experiences of precariousness and developing resilience and reworking, it is worth then briefly looking at why women prefer these groups. To my knowledge, there were two women’s groups operating in Leeds at the time of my study. One was set up for and by women seeking asylum and the other was set up by a local mental health charity that offered a weekly lunch for the women to come together and chat, as well as summer holiday outings for the women and their children. After attending the latter with Sara, I asked her why she liked the women’s group:

It's a little bit difficult [at the mixed groups] there because all of this, you go in and you think all these men are watching you, talking to you when I go there and I don't want to be there, no. One time even, because it happens to me every time I go, the men were coming to talk to me and I didn't feel good and I leave. [...] if it was women and men's maybe never I didn't be there you know.[...] And because some women they don't want to go where men are as well and it's very important. I feel safe when [...] it's just women and you can talk and yes I feel safe.[...]I prefer women's groups because it's women and I feel safe in the women's group and I like to stay just with women because when I'm with women I feel more power, it's the women there and no men, but more because it's safe for all the women. And I think this is the best thing they have here in the UK, the women's group ...

These feelings were reflected in other conversations. For instance, Tharushi described the women's groups as "relaxed" and Hiruni said she "did not like to be around all the men [...] women's ones are easier". If someone does not feel secure, they are unlikely to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences and therefore less likely to engage in acts that will produce mutual aid or wider consciousness building. There is a large body of work that looks at how women may feel, or be, excluded or fearful in some spaces (see for instance Valentine, 1989, Pain, 1997, Pain and Aid, 2012, Lewis et al., 2015c). In the context of women in the asylum system, this is likely to be compounded due to past trauma, including large numbers of women having experienced abuse and/or violence from men (Silove et al., 1997, Heise et al., 2002, Home Office, 2010a, Palermo et al., 2014). Here, we can see the women in my study felt less secure and relaxed at the mixed groups and safer in women-only spaces.

As Sara put it, she also "feels more power" in the women's only spaces. The women felt empowered to not only be vulnerable and talk about how they were feeling but also to act to support each other in these spaces: empowerment can be central to the gaining of confidence and strength to face difficult periods and even challenge the status quo (Deepta and Müller, 2016). In the case of Sara, as discussed above, it was being in these groups and the women within the groups that provided her with the information, support and also confidence to find a solicitor and put in a fresh claim for asylum.

While consciousness building in the 1970's came out of a desire for women to come together in their own spaces, away from men (Anonymous, 1975, Sarachild, 1978), it should not be assumed that all women's spaces are safe spaces where all women can feel equally empowered (Lewis et al., 2015c). Indeed, it is important to understand gender can intersect with other aspects such as class, race and migration status when looking at social networks and consciousness building (Keating, 2005, Sigona, 2012). Only once in my research did someone note difficulties around attending the groups. Hiruni told me:

... I stopped going to these groups and everything, is because it's just a reminder of where I am and this makes me more depressed, like I just want to go under. So that's why I'm trying to stay away but I also need that connection, the support.

This highlights that constantly having to relate to people through her migration status, and thus be reminded of her hyper- precarious situation could be difficult. Nonetheless,

she also draws out the fact she needed this “*connection*”. Apart from this one exception, all the women only spoke positively about the women's groups.

These groups are, of course, not spaces for all women but rather for women who are in some way also engaged with the UK asylum system and therefore share something more than their gender. Whilst the sharing of precarious life experiences can happen across groups, it can be easier in spaces where the intersections of different precarities come together (Sigona, 2012, Lorey, 2015). Sara provides some insight:

Well I know women from the group, they support, the good things from the group is you make friends and you've never met them before, different countries, you know, they are difficult countries and things like this. For me it is not important what they are, if they are Muslim or if they are Christian, never I didn't see this you know. And it's very lovely when you become friends with people like this, you've just met them there and the women are really lovely, you know the women there. Then the good thing is they support you, they give you ideas, how to work with the Home Office, where to go, you know they show you places you've never been before and this help me maybe when I say they refuse me, they give like this. Okay they refused you, you maybe should do this, you maybe should do this and when I go to the groups I feel very happy.[...] they understand, they are in the same situation, there is no like, oh you are from Albania, you are from Afghanistan, or wherever it is, there are all the same and they support you.

As Sara explains, what brought women together was their shared experience of being women seeking asylum, with aspects of identity such as religion, ethnic group or country of origin mattering less. This is similar to the experiences of the Indian youth in Jeffrey's (2010, 2011) work who, through their shared experience of 'timepass', could build solidarities, sometimes across caste and class boundaries. However, the importance of these networks to the women in my study was somewhat more profound; these networks were not only about sharing experiences or passing time with short lived political action (Jeffrey, 2010; 474-5), but had a direct impact on their ability to cope with moments of 'crisis', their ability to cope with their hyper-precarious situation, navigate their case and deal with detention or avoid deportation. Of course, there may be other women who did not share these feelings who I did not meet, as they did not engage in these spaces (see Chapter 4). Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the role of women-only spaces for some women seeking asylum as places where they can not only

get emotional support, but also practical advice. In these groups women can learn to and gain the confidence to engage in acts of resilience and reworking.

While asylum support groups often provide crucial advice services, access to material goods and a hot meal, the support goes beyond this to produce spaces where information sharing occurs and matrixes of care exist. This can help people cope with their lives of 'precarity' (Butler, 2006, 2009, 2016). Asylum groups are important in helping people if they are flung into moments of crisis (Chapter 5, Bourdieu, 2000) and provide access to information that can be a lifeline – telling people what they need to do next, supporting them to get lawyers and helping someone build their confidence to react. Furthermore, through consciousness building, people can become aware that their experience is shared and as such can come to the realization of their “existential vulnerability” (Lorey, 2015; unpagged); indeed, that they are held in uneven power relations (Katz, 2004). While the groups did not cause any acts of resistance, there were acts of resilience and reworking, which can be seen as (sometimes) laying the groundwork for resistance (Katz, 2004). What is more, even when resistance does not occur, the fact people find themselves in a hyper-precarious situation could make these acts of resilience and reworking invaluable to the individual. These actions could be the difference between staying in the UK and being deported to a situation where they may face violence or even death. Therefore, their role in sustaining and improving life for those in the asylum system should not be underestimated. By accessing groups, especially women-only groups, those in my study did not only passively wait, but gained resilience and learnt, in some small ways, to rework the asylum system. Through sharing their precarious situation, they could increase their resilience to, and reduce, the precarities of their life.

8.2 Friendships: Precarious Support

While people often met through the groups, friendships tended to extend beyond them, with people regularly meeting at each other's houses, phoning and texting each other to offer support. This extended the networks of mutual aid and care beyond the timespace of the groups and into the women's everyday lives. As such, many of the friendships that my participants had were with other people seeking asylum. The women tended to find these friendships easier, as they understood each other's situation and they would not need to worry about what people might think. However, friendships with UK citizens did occur. Some preceded asylum claims, while others were made through places of worship,

meeting other parents at schools, seeing people in the street or volunteering opportunities. As Gill (2009b; unpagged) points out, engaging with citizens “can provide strong loyalties between local communities and the asylum seekers in their midst, precisely because, through their co-presence, asylum seekers ceased to be mere asylum seekers, but become active and valid members of the community”. This can result in ‘citizens’ supporting the ‘non-citizens’ in their claim, providing them not only with political clout but, also often financial, moral and practical support. Extending Gill’s (2009b) work, I look at this from the perspective of the person seeking asylum to show how friendships with UK citizens could help people reduce their precariousness, while acknowledging this is not always a simple process devoid of emotion.

Friendships with citizens could be particularly useful in helping people meet their basic needs. These friends are not in the same financially precarious position as those in the asylum system (see Chapter 7). While they may have had their own financial challenges, they can still access the normal financial processes and are more likely to have access to cash. This meant that friends offered to pay for things that people seeking asylum could otherwise not afford. Let us look at two different examples:

[M]y friend say that she’ll pay the line rental [for the internet] so she paid the whole year. [...]and I told her I’ll pay her monthly, so little by little, I can’t pay it all at once and so...but I pay the £3.50 which is the monthly...it’s £3.50 so it’s not too bad, since I don’t have to pay the line rental, so it’s good.

(Hiruni)

My friend [the bedding is a] present from her. I can’t buy things, she buy the bed, she buys all these Spiderman for him and one day when he [her son] was at school she bring it, fixed the bed for him and when he come from school he was very excited. Yes I can’t forget him face, ah very happy, and he say thank you mum, thanks I love you. I said it’s not from me it’s from [my friend].

(Sara)

In the first example, the friendship allowed Hiruni to access a cheap and affordable deal on the internet. This reduced the ‘digital divide’ (Graham, 2011, Graham et al., 2012, Richardson, 2015); not only could she now look up information, including information about the asylum system, much more easily, it also opened up the opportunity for her to access some limited cheap online shopping (see Chapter 7). The friend was willing and

able to pay for the upfront cost and then Hiruni could pay her back monthly. This can in some ways be seen as similar to the transactional exchanges, described in Waite and Lewis's (2017) article on precarious migrants (including people seeking asylum). The article looked at the way this precarious group engaged with the sharing economy as a way to survive, focusing on gifting and sharing and power relations, arguing transactions are "often rooted in, or develop into, asymmetric social relations that serve to diminish desirable outcomes for individual migrants" (Waite and Lewis, 2017; 967). We can then see this not as a 'gift' with which there is an expectation of being paid back; it is more a calculated act of "give and take" as many social interactions are (Malinowski, 2002). Nonetheless, this makes it no less valuable to Hiruni and as we will see, it may even make it easier to accept than a 'true gift'.

In contrast, in the second example, Sara accepts the gift of bedding for her son from her friend. It was a 'true gift' in the sense that there was no expectation of anything in return (Sahlins, 1972, also see Waite and Lewis, 2017). However, as Bourdieu (1997; 238) notes, acts "set up in conditions of lasting asymmetry exclude the possibility of equivalent return or reciprocity likely [...] create lasting relations of dependence". This came at a time when her son had no bedding and so bedding was essential to meet his basic needs. So, whilst Sara accepts the gift from her friend, she had little choice in this and is unlikely, in the near future, to be able to buy anything in return for her friend. It was a "need-oriented rather than profit-oriented" act (Vaughan, 1997; 30). However, as Waite and Lewis (2017; 967) note, Mauss (2000) "argued that to give is to show one's superiority and the receiver must invariably behave in an acceptable manner, if only by expressing gratitude and humility". Similar to the guest/host relationship seen in Chapter 6, there is a power relation between the recipient and giver, with recipient having nothing to offer in return other than their gratitude. The emotional impact of this can be seen when Sara's son says, "*thank you mum, thanks I love you*" and she has to explain that is not from her but from her friend. This act sits in contrast to the pride that she had when, on another occasion, Sara explained to me that she had saved up for several months to buy her son a bike. She may have been happy and grateful to receive the gift, but that does not necessarily make receiving it an easy process, free from uneven power dynamics and emotion. Furthermore, it may well have made her more aware of her position as someone who can only receive a gift from a generous other, highlighting her ontological precarity (see Chapters 3 and 7).

It seems then, that while Gill (2009b; unpagged) notes that “through their co-presence, asylum seekers ceased to be mere asylum seekers”, it cannot be ignored that they are ‘seeking asylum’. This differing socio-legal status is key in how the relationships play out. For the person seeking asylum, acts of support may be useful, even essential, but due to limited alternative options, or ability to ‘return the favour’, accepting support is situated in uneven power relations and can be an emotional process. Nonetheless, these friendships can enhance the quality of life and help people meet their material needs. Unlike Waite and Lewis’s (2017) study, with the exception of the housing situation described in the latter part of Chapter 6, during this research, I did not come across deliberate exploitative transactional exchanges. So, while uneven power relationships may be at play, forming friendships with UK citizens generally (in this study at least) seemed to have a positive impact and improved people’s access to material goods. Furthermore, as I will now show, some friendships could go beyond practical help to give people a deeper sense of belonging and maybe even some sense of ontological security.

As Gill (2009b; unpagged) notes, friendships with UK citizens, as well as with other people seeking asylum, can be useful in moments of crisis. However for Sara, her friends, particularly her friend from the UK, not only helped her cope when she was detained but these relationships went beyond “matrices of care and mutual aid” (Katz, 2004; 246) to become family-like relationships that enhanced her sense of belonging:

Friends, is very important because when you no have family, you no have friends, then you feel like you are somewhere without nobody and...[...] And when you are somewhere in the place like how England is to be and you come from a far land, you don't speak English and you don't have friends, you don't have family, then you find yourself, like you're saying sometimes these thoughts would come to my mind, when before I made friends. [...] But with friends it's better ...you feel like you are home. [...] and for me the friends here are very important and more then there is [my friend], she is English [...] I met her in Wakefield. Last time before two years when she come for Christmas I was in Wakefield with my son, in the hotels, [...] She came to bring you know for Christmas things to him for children. And she met me there with [my son] and [my son] he was more small only two, and she come back for me, she come and she was here in Leeds, when she go back to the hotel and asked for me they said she's gone. And she tried, she tried, she tried very hard there to take my address and one day it was snow, she knocked on my door, I opened the door and I see her you know. [...] It's lovely and I see her every week, she's like my family, she's like my mum, my

sister and my friend, she's everything to me now here in the UK. And it's very, very important to me [...] when you don't have family then the friends, they became like your family, like very important things to you.

While Waite and Lewis (2017; 972) caution us that family-like relationships can be exploitative, as they can pull on ideas of “notions of duty, deference, and familial responsibility”, for Sara this was not the case. The challenges of accepting a ‘true gift’ notwithstanding, she was not expected to return this support. She could not give ‘mutual aid’ and so was not expected to ‘return the favour’ in other ways. Instead, the friendship allowed her to feel like the UK was her ‘home’ and, in some ways, helped her cope with the fact she was estranged from her wider family, allowing her to feel a sense of belonging. As such, it may have helped her reduce feelings of ontological precarity: helping her to build a sense of groundedness, support, and re-imagine her life with caring relationships. However, whilst this was the experience for Sara, (and Grace when she talked about her friendship with a local shopkeeper who “*felt like family*”), it was by no means universally experienced. As discussed above, many found relationships difficult with UK citizens, and as Hiruni explains, the differing socio-legal status could make people feel like outsiders or that they don’t belong:

I feel like, I can do other things, I'm fine, I go to the children's society, I go to school but I don't feel like I belong yet. Because the moment they say, are you working, you know, and stuff, I'm like no. I can't work, this is what I say here, I can't work, I'm not allowed to work.

Practically speaking, as Gill (2009b) observed, friendships with UK citizens may be helpful in accessing goods, services and providing support in moments of crisis that may otherwise not be available. However, the differing socio-legal statuses create uneven power dynamics, that can situate people as outsiders and worsen someone’s sense of ontological precarity. That said, the relationships can also help give someone a sense of groundedness and belonging in the UK, and as such perhaps enable a slight sense of security. The support is precarious, in the sense that it is situated within uneven power relationships that have the potential to become exploitative (see Waite and Lewis, 2017), but also precarious support, in the sense that these friendships support, and reduce, someone’s precariousness.

As such, when people wait in the UK asylum system, they often meet new people, and can actively build relationships. These relationships extend beyond the timespace of the asylum support groups and into the wider community and are not just with other people seeking asylum but, also with UK citizens. While the differing socio-legal position between people seeking asylum and UK citizens can make these relationships unequal, and as such are often experienced differently to those with other people seeking asylum, they can still play, a different, but important, role in helping people both to stay in the UK (for instance through supporting someone when they are detained) and sometimes give a sense of groundedness in the UK. By choosing to go out and through meeting new people, by extending social networks, people seeking asylum can diversify the ways they are able to respond to their hyper-precarious situation, improve their resilience, increase the options for reworking and, sometimes, in small ways, improving their condition(s).

8.3 Education and Volunteering: Creating Purpose in Waiting

In this section, I look specifically at the role volunteering and education can play in creating purpose and structure in the seemingly dead time of waiting in the UK asylum system (Bourdieu, 2000, also see Chapter 5). I argue education and volunteering do, to some degree, allow people to regain 'acceptable' life courses (see Chapter 3), and through this, also gain some skills useful to both their immediate and long-term life. As such, I show how people can disrupt the temporality of being made to wait.

As Noor's comment below shows, the simple act of engaging in courses or other activities not only fills dead time, but can make someone 'feel happy'.

You know about these courses and groups and that they're just to make her [Krishma] happy you know because the doctor told us to do that. When she's feeling happy she, wants to do more things and more activities and then she likes to go out as well.

Going out not only produces 'happiness' but is good for reducing depression and engaging in one activity can encourage someone to engage in further activities (NHS, 2017b).

As I have outlined there are advantages of going out in terms of building support networks and resilience. However, while volunteering and educational courses may help someone get out the house and meet new people, there are other more specific

advantages to this form of activity. By engaging in education or volunteering, someone can develop skills useful for life in the UK. Rashmi explains:

[T]he learning partnership we go to ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] classes, only for eight weeks, now they're having inspiring as achievement course for 6,7 weeks [...] it's more about job research, with how to do interview in that kind of thing with some English grammar and words. And I wish to apply to the college for [further] ESOL because it's very hard to stay at home all day [...] I like to learn something new every day. [...] it's really important [to speak English] because it's very different from our country everything is more difficult. Because I went to the hospital and the system they do is different from our country.

Through attending education, Rashmi not only kept herself busy, but developed skills that may be useful should she receive leave to remain. She learnt how to research jobs in the UK and improve her interviewing skills. Rashmi, in effect, was learning to become an active member of neoliberal society. As such, this can in no way be seen as a radical act of resistance (Katz, 2004) but rather, a way of doing 'timepass' (Jeffrey, 2010, 2011). Beyond making her more employable should she gain leave to remain, attending English classes had (and she hoped would continue to) allow her to improve her immediate situation by better enabling her to navigate life in the UK. Here, she highlights the need to speak clearly with the hospital (she was pregnant at the time of this meeting), at other times talking about her desire to speak easily to her child's nursery or read the correspondence from the Home Office (see Chapter 5 for more on reading correspondence). Improving educational ability is a key way of improving cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1999b, 2005), with English-language education having the additional advantage of helping people build social capital, through being better able to talk to other people in the UK (Bourdieu, 1999b, 2005). However, while the majority of the women in my study did access education classes, this did not come without its challenges.

As a report from the Refugee Council highlighted, for adult education, "the rules around eligibility to study and fee remission for refugees and asylum seekers are complex and subject to frequent change" (Doyle and O'Toole, 2013; 5); simultaneously, there is a general decrease in access to ESOL, and other English language courses (Doyle and O'Toole, 2013). Furthermore, my research found the precarious temporality people are situated in when in the asylum system could also put people off applying for courses. For

instance, if we take Hiruni as an example, she explained to me in her first year that she “*did nothing*”. She thought, “*what if I need to go, detained, or sent back, I didn’t want to start anything I couldn’t finish*”. Despite this worry, and after a year of waiting, she went on to take GCSEs and then register on to a year-long college course in computing.

Hiruni explained to me, she felt the year-long commitment was “*a bigger risk*” due to her fear that she may never complete it; nevertheless, she said:

So now I’m taking a bigger risk I guess, I’ve taken the small one, [...] I put an application in and I’m like I need to do something, I need to have a direction, like I can’t work, I know that’s illegal to work, it’s not illegal to study, so I might as well do something productive.

However, even once the course had started, Hiruni sometimes found that feelings of restlessness, fatigue and despair (see Chapter 5) could make going to class difficult:

I just put in and said I’m sick, I’m sick all the time, tired, if I think about it, but I just couldn’t handle it, I was too edgy.

Here, then, we can see that accessing education in the context of the asylum system can be fraught with difficulties. Not only can it be practically difficult to access, due to the complicated systems and limited funding, but it can also be challenging to engage with due to the temporal uncertainty of the asylum system. People are not sure whether to start something they may not be able to finish, worrying that they may suddenly be lurched from dead time into a moment of crisis (see Chapter 5). Furthermore, due to the way dead time is experienced as existential boredom, they can find it difficult to commit to regularly attending a course (Vitus, 2010; 34, also see Chapter 5). Nonetheless, Hiruni and many of the other women in my study did attend education. Limited options and the fact she had nothing to lose made Hiruni think education was worth the “*risk*”. As she herself put it, “*I might as well do something productive*”.

Education can be seen as ‘productive’ not only because it develops social and cultural capital, discussed above, but because it can also be seen as an acceptable alternative to work. It offered the women a way of integrating with society and re-entering the ‘socially acceptable’ patterns of a neoliberal life course (Yian, 2004, Conlon, 2007, Jeffrey, 2008, Hynes, 2011). Of course, this may not have been what they expected from this stage of their life and therefore they may still have felt “*tensions and frustrations*” (Bourdieu, 2000; 234); nonetheless, it offered a way of repositioning themselves as active members of neoliberal society (as opposed to ‘lazy’ or ‘burdensome others’, see Chapter 7).

Another way women developed their cultural capital, English-language skills and gained a sense they were 'working', was through volunteering. Here, Tharushi explains how she also wanted to volunteer, describing it as going "to work":

I am looking for one volunteer work, really I want to work with some small children like nursery or childcare, I want to go to work. I went to [an asylum organisation] and I asked I want to work as a volunteer and they asked me to go to one place and register but I haven't got time to go there. Yes soon I want to go and I want to make a little bit busy. I really want like to work with children.

Tharushi is thinking about both the immediate advantages of volunteering as well as its potential to improve her longer-term options. The very fact she is able to think beyond the present highlights the importance of education and volunteering in interrupting the dead time. As I explained in Chapter 5, waiting in dead time can cause the present to become the overwhelming point of reference; people find themselves living in a present that has little existential value (Bourdieu, 2000, Vitus, 2010). Through education and volunteering, the women in my study could both envision a future and take immediate action in the present that may in some way (should they receive leave to remain) help that future become a reality. Education and volunteering disrupted the precarious temporality of the waiting period; while they still waited for leave to remain, they could dictate, in small ways, the terms of that waiting. Furthermore, they could choose to not wait statically in dead time but instead actively use these periods to start to build that future, thus making the present have a sense of value, causing it to cease to be a seemingly meaningless and overwhelming point of reference (see Chapter 5). While the women may still have worried about being flung into moments of 'crisis' (and while it seems unlikely they would have been able to think past their immediate need to react to the state's requests in these moments of crisis (Chapter 5, Bourdieu, 2000), they could, in small ways, change the temporality of this time of waiting. They could challenge the temporal power of being made to wait "in a time orientated by others" (Bourdieu, 2000; 237).

In this section, it is finally worth considering how, for one of my participants at least, Sara, experiences of waiting in the asylum system changed her long-term aspirations and thus caused her to try and use the waiting period differently. She was looking at getting on a

college course to improve her English, as she eventually wanted to go to university and become a women's asylum lawyer. Sara explained to me:

[F]rom the beginning when I start all this with asylum I didn't know nothing exactly you know, I was thinking because I will get my status quick, all these things. But after all this now I've changed I see the situation different, I see people who are waiting for five years, six years and it changed me like a person, it changed me [...] one day if I get my stay I want to do for example, I [...] would be a lawyer, work with women. It changed me in different ways, being a better person, [I am now] thinking about the things before I do them. Like how it [working] was for the money, never before I did it I was thinking to work for something and work and help more people. But now this has changed me, all this process, all what happened in my life changed me like a person.

Education and volunteering, in most cases, can best be seen as acts of resilience (Katz, 2004). While they may help people cope with waiting, disrupt the precarious temporality of the waiting period and even interrupt the act of being made to wait, they happen within and support “the general trajectory of the developments” that necessitate these acts in the first place (Katz, 2004; 246). However, in the case of Sara, her experience of waiting, particularly her experience of detention, has changed the way she sees the world. She has an awareness of her condition and a realisation that there is a need to undo “these uneven power relations and undermine the means through which they are set in motion and enforced” (Katz, 2004; 256). As such, Sara hopes to use education to advocate for and improve the lives of other people seeking asylum. While these may not be acts of resistance (Katz, 2004; 242), there is at least an attempt to rework the system. She is starting to use this waiting period to gain the education through which she hopes to “create more viable terrains of [asylum] practice” for others (Katz, 2004; 247).

8.4 Embracing Opportunities

The term ‘asylum seeker’ is used to describe people seeking asylum (see Chapter 1). This term reduces someone to their socio-legal status. It does not acknowledge other parts of their identity and other life experiences, even though people seeking asylum are intersectional, rounded human beings. They have experiences that happened before they entered the UK asylum system, and lives that transcend this situation. Each person has

their own life history, their own identity, social and cultural background. My participants all had three things in common, they were all women, at some point they had all migrated to the UK and they were all part of a claim for asylum. It is this final aspect of someone's life experience that this thesis (and indeed most research on people seeking asylum) focuses on. However, what came across when talking to the women in my study was how, for some, being a woman who had migrated to the UK had a profound effect on their overall day-to-day lives as they navigated this time of waiting in the asylum process. Therefore, in this final empirical section I wish to look at how some of the women in my study experience this precarious time of waiting not only as someone seeking asylum but also as a woman, with her own life history, who has migrated to the UK.

To be clear, some of the women felt there were very few, if any, differences between the position for women in their country of origin and the position for women in the UK. Due to the fact that women were claiming asylum though, it did mean they all felt they had "a well-founded fear of being persecuted" (UNHCR, 1979; 11) and did not wish to, or could not, return to their country of origin at this time (see Chapter 2). They also were disproportionately likely to have experienced gender-based violence in the country of origin (Home Office, 2010a). However, in drawing out stories of those that did feel there was a difference, I do not wish to reproduce colonial ideas of 'other' (Mayblin, 2017). Nor do I want to feed into the already-damaging discourse that implies women seeking asylum need to demonstrate certain "proper modes of 'female' behaviour" (Freedman, 2008a; 425, also see Oxford, 2005, Smith, 2016) or conform to 'stereotyped' notions of 'foreign women', that of a 'victim' of 'barbaric' cultures in order to be somehow in genuine need of support (Oswin, 2001). Rather, I want to highlight these narratives as it is important to show that the women within my study cannot be reduced to 'asylum seekers'. In so doing, I further highlight the limitations of temporal power by drawing out how women can not only dictate the conditions of their waiting so they 'survive' in the asylum system, but sometimes through embracing opportunities are able to, albeit momentarily, thrive.

In a discussion with Krishma and Noor, we explored some of the differences between being in the UK and Pakistan, their country of origin:

Emma: compared to Pakistan is it different?

Noor: *It depends, it depends on families. Because some families more religious, if they are more religious they tell women to stay inside. It just depends on the families.*

Emma: *... Is there a difference personally?*

Noor: *Not so much. It's okay and like in big cities, and in big cities like [name of city] they dress like us, like here jeans and things as well. [...but] the laws and police are not good and the government they don't help you if you're a woman or anything like that.*

Noor: *She [Krishma] saying like she's happy to be here because there's so many laws for the women. Because obviously in Pakistan if your husband abuses you, or hits you, no one does anything. Because she's been to this police station [in Pakistan] so many times and they cannot do anything for her. So she saying, like, she's happy that I'm here so if I'm, in case if my future husband do anything to me so I can go to someone and tell them, like he did something. That's what she saying she's happy to be here. [...] yeah there are lots of problems, only for the case and things.*

Krishma claimed asylum almost immediately on arrival in the UK and so she has only experienced life in the UK as a person seeking asylum, subject to the conditions of the asylum system. She has never been allowed to work in the UK, she has only had access to limited finance and housing and has always had to report to the Home Office. Being in the asylum system did cause difficulties for Krishma. Nonetheless, she distinguishes between these challenges and her overall experience of the UK. Despite the conditions of the asylum system, she is “happy” to be in the UK. It is the additional legal protection and rights for women that makes her “happy” to be here. In Pakistan, Krishma claims of domestic abuse had been ignored and she had not been able to get support from the authorities; however, in the UK, in her words “they respect you”.

Sara similarly felt that the law and structures supported her as a woman more than in her country of origin. After talking to me in depth about how the Home Office had taken her freedoms away and how she felt “unfree” due to the restraints of the asylum system she explained:

Sara: *In our country no, there it is not like here, for women you don't have rights, you don't have...it's different.*

Emma: *So apart from the fact that the Home Office takes your freedom away as a woman you feel like maybe you have more freedom?*

Sara: Yes [...] In my country you have men, children then women. The women doesn't have rights [...] It's like you go out and you know nobody will touch you if you don't want. For example yes, if you are in town even if they are drunk, even if you are drunk and you are walking nobody is allowed to come and beat you for example or touch you, because you know you call 999, they will come for you. But in our country even if you are going to your work, you know and maybe something happened to you, you cannot even call someone, there is no policeman come to help you. [...] But here I feel this safety, you know like for example whatever happened I have my phone, I will call 999 and I know they will come for me even because I'm not from this country, I have the same rights and this is what keeps me, I say it's good. [...] I feel safe with the police here. I feel safe because I know everything happens, I call 999 then they will come. But in my country we don't have this, you don't feel safe you know.

Two sets of laws are playing out in the women's lives: laws around asylum and, simultaneously laws about gender and violence. Each can in turn be utilised as a tactic for governing populations. However, it is not the laws themselves but rather the tactics, the deployment and ways they are utilised that is 'the art of government' (Sokhi-Bulley, 2014; unpagged, Foucault, 1977). While the government (through the Home Office and other organisations) may utilise the laws as tactics to help dictate the conditions of someone's waiting (Auyero, 2010), it cannot fully control how people react to them. While government may want to control this population, people do not fit neatly into singular boxes. We can then see that while laws aimed at shaping, guiding or affecting a person's conditions (Gordon, 1991) may have governmental effects, while they may be used as tactics to reinforce border regimes, causing people seeking asylum to wait and make the UK seem an unwelcoming place (see for instance Chapter 5, Tyler, 2006, Conlon, 2010, Darling, 2011a, Gill, 2016), the UK's particular approach to governing gender-based violence can result in some women who are also seeking asylum being "happy" to be in the UK.

Legal rights do not exist in a vacuum, and the comments above show attitudes and social expectations can have just as profound effect on people's everyday activities. Several of the women in my study commented that they found they had greater freedom of movement in the UK as it was acceptable to go out without their husband or another family member present. This had a notable effect on how they lived their day-to-day lives.

Tharushi was not fleeing gender-based persecution and indeed was here in the UK with her husband and child; however, she explains:

In my country normally girls we don't go to shopping. [...], here I'm free now, we can go, no one...if they are in my country she go alone it is not good, some people see, they tell oh that girl is walking along, not like this country the culture is different now. But here, mm, it is not a wrong thing going alone because we are go... if we are good we can go alone and we can do all the things and we are coming home, we don't do any bad things, no? So I feel like good because we are doing all things [laughs].

This not only affected Tharushi's life, but also had an effect on her husband, as he did not need to accompany her when she left the house, giving them both greater freedom, something she explained to me they both preferred. Not just law and the application of the law but social attitudes in the UK affected the way people live out their day-to-day lives.

In Chapter 6 I noted that Gill (2009b) found "[t]he British state utilises both stillness and mobility in the governance of asylum seeking bodies", with people's personal freedoms being routinely curtailed and their movements controlled by the state. Here we see that some women and their families can experience greater freedom of movement when in the UK. The asylum system may make it such that they are not able to move accommodation and they may need to be in for the post or attend asylum appointments (Darling, 2014, also see Chapters 5 and 6) but, simultaneously, in everyday ways, some people had greater freedom of movement. As a result, some articulated this as a period of "freedom" in in their lives.

This highlights that people who are seeking asylum in the UK cannot be reduced to their status as 'asylum seeker'. While the conditions of the asylum system have an effect on their day-to-day lived reality, this is interwoven with other experiences that are affected by a whole range of things including gender, cultural background and life history. As people wait in the UK, they do not only experience this period as someone who is seeking asylum but also as someone with a life that transcends the asylum process. People's experience of waiting will vary, and some people may even, in small ways, experience this time positively.

This could perhaps most be seen in the experiences of Hiruni who, despite all the challenges and frustrations of the asylum system, occasionally described the asylum

system as “*an opportunity*”. She had come to the UK directly from Saudi Arabia to seek asylum. She was fleeing domestic abuse and, while finding it hard to adjust to being around men, Hiruni also wanted to embrace some opportunities being in the UK had opened up to her. As I have already mentioned, she did GCSEs and started a computer course. She also used these skills when working with a local asylum charity to build their website, telling me how she wanted to “*make the most of everything she can do*”. On another occasion, an asylum charity asked her to show the Mayor of Leeds around the local fete:

...I think not everyone would have this opportunity, not even, I mean I never had these opportunities where I lived before. Not that I thought of it or dreamt of it, [...] It has given me purpose, you know and direction and holding me together [...] It was nice, it was like I felt being respected, you know, like all your life you've been criticised for being a woman, that you won't be able to do this or that, but that day I can think back and smile, like I felt really good, you know. [...] I'm getting opportunities I'd never dreamt of, you know, like it's beyond about all my expectations in certain ways. [...] you got to meet a lot of higher level people. I met Hilary Benn the Councillor or the MP or something, I didn't know...I don't even know their names right. [...] just feeling good, like okay, it's nice to be up there, feeling respected. [...] I feel like, yes my life has been, it's been a crazy journey, that's all I could say. It's not like I'm asking for these opportunities, but I'm enjoying it whilst it's lasting. [...] Just take it as it comes. There might not be so many picture perfect, but it's not bad, I wouldn't say it's too bad, you know. [...] I'm getting opportunities I'd never dreamt of.

In this quotation, you can hear the excitement in Hiruni's voice; she is not only talking about her attitude towards embracing opportunities, but also highlights that these opportunities would not have been available to her if she had not come to seek asylum in the UK. For her it is a combination of her life history and the way she lives out the period of waiting in the asylum system that has caused her to see things this way. She was clearly getting the chance to gain some social and cultural capital through her volunteering (Bourdieu, 1999b, 2005) but more than that, Hiruni was able to, in her words “*push myself*” and do things she had never dreamt of. For her as a woman who was seeking asylum and fleeing domestic abuse, her volunteering, her acts of ‘doing waiting’, had opened up possibilities. Of course, as the many quotes from Hiruni throughout this thesis, highlight, her experience was not always easy or full of opportunities.

In my final meeting with Hiruni, I asked her to reflect on how her life had changed since being in the asylum system:

I think (long pause) I would say it has impacted me in both ways, good and bad, because it has given me the opportunity to be free, to make my own decisions with other things, like I volunteer. I could go for certain classes, although we're limited, we're quite limited in the things that we can do, but there are tiny things to keep us going. The bad I feel like I can't plan for more than a couple of weeks at a time because even simple things like buying a heater, knowing that I might not be here tomorrow and I'm not going to carry that with me. So it was hard making the small...I mean just...it's just really difficult to plan ahead and I think that's bad because I feel like I can't move with my life, my personal life. Yes I'm free to get the experience of working with people, with men and I have no objections where I go, I can go to that free music gig which is mixed which I wouldn't have [before coming to the UK]. Like so there is the good and the bad, so either way it's not easy, I wouldn't tell anybody yes, there's this process come let's do it and it's going to be so fun, it's not. But I don't really regret it, I'm glad I did it to at least experience what I'm experiencing right now, I think. [...] I have like independence.

The precarious temporality and practical restraints of the asylum system have an impact on how she lives out this waiting period; it is clear that waiting for asylum in the UK has created challenges and frustrations whilst simultaneously opening up opportunities. The experience of waiting may not be “fun”, but she does not regret it and she feels that, despite the regulations and practices of the asylum process, she still has greater independence and that she can, thrive, albeit in limited ways.

For some women in my study, particularly those that came from situations where they face gender-based violence and/or restrictions on their mobility, they identified positive elements of being in the UK. In so doing, they often drew a distinction between their experiences as people seeking asylum and their experiences as women. This highlights that if we are to understand people's experiences of the asylum system it is important to not reduce people to ‘asylum seekers’. Through understanding people as rounded and intersectional human beings this section has shown some of the limits of temporal power, illustrating that while the government may have some ability to make people wait, it cannot completely dictate the conditions of that waiting.

8.5 Conclusion

As people engage with the UK asylum system, they find themselves waiting in a 'betwixt and between' state (Turner, 1995), their expected life course on hold, their day-to-day rhythms and routines affected, situated in a precarious temporality uncertain about when, or if, they could be flung between dead time and moments of crisis. However, as this chapter has shown, people do not wait passively. They actively 'do waiting' in ways that can decrease the precarities of this situation – both improving their ability to meet their basic needs and helping them develop support networks that can reduce feelings of ontological precarity. This places them in a position where they are better able to cope with moments of 'crisis'. Through 'doing waiting', people are able to improve not only their current situation but also their longer-term prospects. Furthermore, they are able to change their experience of time, that of practice as 'temporalization', that is 'time' in a human sense (Bourdieu, 2000; 214, also see Chapter 3); able to move beyond a time experienced only in the present to think about the future, and in so doing give meaning to the present.

Doing waiting, the way people pass time as they wait, can be seen as 'timepass' (Jeffrey, 2010, 2011); As Jeffreys (2010, 2011) explained, it is an active process that opens up possibilities even as it creates frustration. Waiting, for the Indian youth of Jeffrey's (2011, 2010) study, resulted in a 'temporal rupture'; their expected life courses were on hold; however, they did not also experience 'temporal power' in the way those waiting in the asylum system do. They are not in a hyper-precarious temporality; they do not have hyper-precarious lives infused with border regimes and the constant threat of destitution, detention or deportation. They do not 'hang' 'on the awaited decision' (Bourdieu, 2000) in the way those in the asylum system must if they are to get some resource crucial to their survival (Auyero, 2012). In this work, I have therefore extended this idea of 'timepass' to show how it can not only be an active process but how, in actively 'doing waiting', someone can take back some control over their temporality. How the women in my study did not only 'hang' "on the awaited decision" (Bourdieu, 2000; 228), but 'did waiting' in ways that could improve their condition(s). Let us now turn to the last chapter of this thesis where, along with some final thoughts on precarity, I will revisit the art of making someone wait to further draw out some of the limits of this temporal power.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Possibilities for Action

This thesis has taken an in-depth ethnographic approach to look at how the processes and practices of the UK asylum system affect the day-to-day lives of people who are seeking asylum. It has looked in depth at how women lived as they waited in the asylum process. Through this, the thesis has worked to “catalogue and analyse” (Bourdieu, 2000; 208) both the production of the condition of waiting and what life is like under the resulting conditions. The research has shown how people find themselves living in a precarious temporality, how temporal power is produced and maintained and how it can be challenged: how the conditions of people’s waiting are dictated and how people can, to some extent, dictate the conditions of their waiting. In looking at what life is like under the resulting conditions it has also shown what the condition(s) of life are like for those who live in a precarious temporality. To do this the research has argued for a dual approach to work that looks at lives of ‘precarity’ (in the Butler, 2006, 2009, 2016 sense). As such this thesis has not only added to our understanding of women who are seeking asylum’s lives, but also to academic discussions on waiting, precarity, temporality and temporal power. By way of a conclusion I will look across the study, developing the arguments, drawing out some of the key findings, and highlighting ways to take this work forward.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first section I add to the ideas around waiting, precarious temporality and temporal power, revisiting my analysis of the art of making someone wait and drawing out some limits of temporal power. Secondly, I turn to look in more depth at the ideas of precarity developed and utilised in this thesis. I will show how the idea of dual precarity fits into, and helps develop, academic ideas around the understanding of the condition(s) of precarious lives, before turning to look at how policy and everyday practice could help reduce the precariousness of the lives of people who are seeking asylum. Thirdly, I consider the geography of precarious temporality, before exploring some political possibilities and future options for the study of precarity. The sections all highlight the possibilities for action - for the women in my study’s, for the

government and for individuals who may want to better understand lives of precarity, improve the lives of people seeking asylum and reduce the effects of precarisation.

9.1 Precarious Temporality, Waiting, and the Limits of Temporal Power

Pierre Bourdieu's (2000) ideas of time, temporality and waiting in *Pascalian Meditations*, have given this thesis a way of looking at the governmental effects of waiting and how temporal power is exerted and opposed. In this section, I want to look further at how precarious temporality plays out and some limits of temporal power.

By taking a temporal approach, this thesis has help draw out the link between precarity and temporal uncertainty. It has shown that precarity is not only about the fragility of life or/and the insecurity of labour, finance, food or housing conditions but at its heart is also about temporal insecurity; not knowing when something might change, or happen. It is about not being able to plan for, or have control over, the future. It is about living in an unstable present. However, as I noted in Chapter 3, studies of precarity need to avoid homogenising or simplifying experiences, as precarity is produced and lived very differently in different contexts (also see Waite, 2009).

Unlike many other people who live lives of precarity, people seeking asylum are not 'merely' precarious but hyper-precarious, as their lives are infused with immigration regimes. People live with the temporal uncertainty that they may not only lose the basics needed to survive but that the state could make them destitute, detain or deport them; they live with the fear of "sovereign abandonment" (Darling, 2009; 649), of detention and potential "return to persecution" (Waite et al., 2013; 26). This fear is produced and maintained, both through their own experiences but also through seeing someone else being made destitute, detain or deported (see Chapters 5 and 6). The fear that comes from this temporal uncertainty is central to the art of governing this population as it is this that causes people not to act on their own interests but rather to comply with the state's commands - waiting and submitting to a "time orientated by others" (Bourdieu, 2000; 237, Chapter 5). However, in Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson and Waite's project (Waite et al., 2013, Lewis et al., 2015a, 2015b) on experiences of forced labour among refugees and people seeking asylum, they found that some people (particularly refused asylum seekers) tried to stay under the state's radar. While they shared their detainability and deportability with those in my study, and thus like those in my study also lived in a precarious temporality they did not react by complying and engaging with the state. As

people can and do disengage, this shows temporal power is not absolute and there are limits to temporal power.

In Chapter 5, when the other woman in Sara's accommodation disappeared after Sara's detention, it was because she had lost hope. Hope is central to keeping someone engaging with the state and waiting in the asylum process. As Lorey (2015; unpagged) notes, people's responses to precarisation "can signify modes of self-governing that represent a conformist self-development, a conformist self-determination, enabling extraordinary governability. Practices of empowerment, however, can also breakthrough, refuse, or escape". To lose hope is hardly an 'empowerment', however, the choice to disengage from the asylum system can lead to a person's bodily freedoms, well-being and potentially life being at risk, so it can therefore undoubtedly be read as an act of 'extraordinary' self-determination. Bourdieu (2000) explained that a person can be durably 'held' (so that (s)he can be made to wait, hope, etc.) only to the extent that they are invested in 'the game'. The art of governing, of making people wait, can here be seen as the art of balancing fear and hope so someone modifies their behaviour in such a way that they comply with the asylum system. As I explained in Chapter 5, the tactic being used can be seen as one of a stick and carrot: people hope they will get leave to remain, or at least be allowed to remain in the UK, whilst simultaneously fearing the fact they can have the conditions of their life changed at any time.

While Sara's housemate may have gone under the state's radar, none of the women in my study did, and instead they continued hoping and waiting, self-regulating their behaviour. Kennedy and Markula (2011), highlight that when people wait, they become aware they cannot act on their own interests. However, while people may hope and wait, self-regulating their behaviour as they hang on the awaited decision (Bourdieu, 2000), this thesis has drawn out that people can and do still act on their own interests. A more nuanced reading of temporal power that does not see power as top down but rather enacted in everyday relationships is then needed. Through drawing a Foucauldian approach to power (see Chapter 3) I will now look to provide this more nuanced reading of waiting and temporal power.

As we have seen in this thesis, particularly Chapter 8, whilst people are in the asylum system, they make friendships, and attend groups through which they receive practical and emotional support, gain social and cultural capital through engaging with education and volunteering opportunities (Bourdieu, 1999b, 2005) and choose to embrace other

opportunities as they arise. Furthermore, through these networks and activities, people develop resilience, engage in acts of reworking (Katz, 2004) and reduce the precarities of their lives. They still act in ways to reduce their precarious situation, but this is not having the effect of producing subordinate subjects (Lorey, 2015). As such, we can understand waiting “not as the capacity to ride out the passage of time or as the absence of action, but rather as an active, conscious, materialized practice in which people [can] forge new political alliances” (Jeffrey, 2008; 957). Consciousness raising can occur and the groundwork for resistance may be laid down (Katz, 2004) as people are free agents and action is possible (Ettlinger, 2007).

For Katz (2004), resistance must not only improve someone’s situation but also actively change and undermine the conditions that the situation is predicated on. This normally requires disrupting conditions of exploitation with “the invocation of an oppositional consciousness” (Katz, 2004; 251). While within this study resilience and acts of reworking appear to be much more common, there did appear to be some moments where the groundwork for resistance was being laid and where the boundaries between resilience, reworking and resistance were becoming blurred (Katz, 2004; 152). This can be seen when members of the women’s group considered their options for mobilising against the deportation of Sara, or when, in part due to her experience of this support, Sara talked about becoming an asylum lawyer in the future. As such, what the women did with their time could limit the governmental effects of being made to wait. The asylum process did affect what people could do with their time, but some activities allowed people to prepare for moments of ‘crisis’ and raise consciousness about the asylum process. Power was “exerted from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations” (Foucault, 1978; 94, in Macleod and Durrheim, 2002; 44). Rather than the asylum system simply producing docile bodies (Foucault, 1977), through ‘doing waiting’ and refusing to wait passively, the women in my study used the waiting period to develop the skills, and awareness, needed for resistance (Katz, 2004). As such, governmental effects of precarisation was reduced as people utilised the waiting period to reduce their precarious situation.

Furthermore, when we look at temporal power we can perhaps see moments of resistance. Unlike the resistance described by Katz (2004), this is not collective action, but rather happens much more on the scale of the individual, the scale on which the temporal power of being made to wait is exerted. While asylum laws and regulations may exist on

the scale of the state, temporal power happens through the embodied experiences of temporalisation – people’s experiences of time (Bourdieu, 2000, also see Chapter 3 and 5). Here, then, acts such as attending education classes or making the most of opportunities as they arise can be read as acts of resistance to temporal power. People are not held in dead time, but rather choose to act in ways that give this time purpose and meaning. Furthermore, through developing skills and building networks, people can improve their ability to cope with moments of ‘crisis’, reducing the effects of being flung between dead time and crisis (Bourdieu, 2000, also see Chapter 5). The women in my study made choices which affected their temporality, taking opportunities and, albeit momentarily, making the most of this time. To some degree the women ‘reclaim the time of life’ (Schneider, 2002, in Neilson and Rossiter, 2006) and continued with their life course. If temporal power is the power to make someone wait and dictate the conditions of their waiting, here, we see not only the limits of this power but also people resisting temporal power, as they make choices about the conditions and temporalities of their waiting. They may therefore act to reduce the precariousness of their temporality.

Bourdieu (2000) acknowledges temporal power can never be experienced in its absolute form. Through drawing on a Foucauldian approach to power (Chapter 3), this thesis has helped to illuminate some ways in which this temporal power plays out, it has shown how temporal power affects the lives of people seeking asylum while providing space to examine “oppositional practices” (Katz, 2004; 242). It has shown that while the women in my study modified their behaviour and hung on the awaited decision (Bourdieu, 2000), they did, albeit in small ways, dictate the conditions of their waiting, and through this develop resilience, engage in reworking and open up possibilities for resistance. People seeking asylum find themselves waiting, and living, in a precarious temporality. However, through the way people live out their lives, they can submit to but also challenge the production of this condition and improve the conditions of their life. In the next section I want to look further at the ideas of precarity in this thesis.

9.2 Some Comments on Precarities

The reading of precarious conditions in this thesis has pulled from two traditions: work that has developed out of a focus on insecure labour, that looks at the everyday, often practical, challenges of precarity, and its use as a rallying point for resistance; and work that has seen precariousness as a broader condition of life (see Chapter 3). However, to

neatly divide this academic literature into boxes is perhaps misleading. As Butler (2006, 2009, 2016) notes, for her, the general condition of precariousness may be felt by all but 'precarity' is a vulnerability imposed on the disenfranchised. It is those who experience insecure labour, housing and financial conditions that are likely to also have a greater sense of ontological insecurity, and thus be aware of the precariousness of their life. As such, it is hardly surprising that much work on lives of precarity crosses over and blurs the boundaries between these two types of precarity. Work exploring precarious lives will inevitably look at how people think, cope, feel and live in precarious conditions. For instance, as I noted in Chapter 3, Kalyan's (2013), work looks at both the practical difficulties in living conditions following slum demolition whilst also drawing out the wider ways this produces a precarious urban temporality. Similarly, to take just one other example, Chase's (2016; 197) exploration of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK and their experiences of reaching adulthood finds that the transition in legal rights at this age, can for some create a "profound sense of insecurity and compromise well-being" that affects physical and emotional stability. Indeed, most studies of precarious lives will in some way touch on these two types of precariousness, as they are so tightly interwoven and in many ways are constitutive of each other. However, most studies lean more heavily towards one academic tradition or the other and therefore there is a tendency to overlook some of the conditions of living precarious lives.

Banki (2013; 67), makes a similar observation, noting "the literature has made frequent reference to the fact that precarity of one kind may aggravate other precarities", going on to start to tease apart precarity in her work. However, her project is to develop a 'precarity of place'. While she usefully acknowledges deportable bodies have a teetering quality - a quality that produces anxiety and has "both physical implications (e.g., difficulty to plan for the future) and psychological ones, and affects the kind of choices that people make in everyday life" (Banki, 2013; 70), she does not, as I have done here, attempt to elaborate or further draw out what these precarities may look like, or how they may play out in deportable populations' everyday lives. I would agree with Banki (2013) that there is a 'precarity of place' and indeed I come to the geography of precarity below. Furthermore, in this thesis I have argued for a temporal precarity and shown how this interlinks with, and produces, other types of precarity, such as financial and housing precarity. However, these are about how lives are made precarious, about what produces the condition of precariousness and thus, on their own, only provides limited scope to look at life under the resulting conditions.

For many academic projects, including Banki (2013), this may not be a problem. As my work on temporal precarity has shown, these understandings can be helpful in identifying what produces precarious populations and what makes precarious lives. However, when looking at the detail of everyday life, the dual approach to precarity, developed and utilised in this thesis, provides a multifaceted way to understand what someone's lived experience of precarity may be.

When this distinction between the conditions that produce precarious lives and the experience of living in precarious conditions are not drawn out, or when people draw more heavily on one academic tradition to explore lives of precarity, it can be challenging to offer a full, and balanced, reading of the lived experiences of precarity. Furthermore, without this more nuanced approach it can be hard to tease apart the tensions and frustrations between the ways people learn to survive with unstable and inadequate resources and the impact on their sense of ontological security. This is where the dual approach to precarity that I have developed here can be useful. While the dichotomy between the two academic traditions to precarity in this thesis may be slightly forced, by teasing precarity apart in this way I have provided a space to explore the nuances and complexities of precarious lives. A dual approach to precarity not only helps us, as it did particularly in Chapter 6, provide a more rounded picture of precariousness that does not privilege one discourse, or experience, over the other, but also allows us, as I did in Chapter 7, to draw out the co-contingencies and tensions between these precarities. As such, it does not rule out wider studies that look at what produces precarious conditions, neither does it contradict the idea of temporal precarity developed here, rather it provides a nuanced way of exploring the lived experiences of those who live under the resulting conditions. This dual approach to precarity provides a framework not just for this thesis, but also for future work that looks to understand the nuances and complexities of living with, and within, precarious condition(s); of living precarious lives. I now want to turn to consider how policy and everyday practice could improve the precarious lives of those who are seeking asylum.

Given the contemporary political climate in the UK and wider Europe (Chapter 1, Anderson, 2013, Tyler, 2015) and the governmental effects of the current asylum processes and practices (this thesis, also see Gill, 2009c, 2016, Conlon, 2010, Darling, 2011a, 2016), it seems unlikely there will be the rewriting of the asylum system – or indeed, of nation states, citizenship and borders – that is needed to transform the

precarities of people who are seeking asylum's lives (Banki, 2013). Nonetheless, I wish to firstly pick up on a few key policy areas that the research highlighted as being particularly problematic, before looking beyond the state for a response to consider how everyday interactions and small acts can improve people's condition(s) of life.

As I have evidenced, linking people's access to support with their socio-legal status produces a hyper-precarious situation and lives lived in a precarious temporality. Furthermore, the process of distinguishing people seeking asylum from the rest of the population and providing them with less support than other people reduces their ability to integrate, stigmatises people and places them as a distinct 'other' (Anderson, 2013). Practically speaking, it also makes it difficult for them to meet their basic needs such as housing (Chapter 6), food or/and other essentials (Chapter 7). In order to improve this, people should not only be given the same access to housing and welfare support as citizens living in the UK, but also the same rights to work. This would give people the opportunity to become independent, help them integrate with the wider community and reduce the problems associated with a large gap in employment (Doyle, 2014, Basedow and Doyle, 2016). Additionally, it would reduce the effects of being made to wait by allowing people to give their days a sense of purpose and allowing them to re-engage with their expected life courses (Chapter 5). I would therefore support the longstanding and ever-growing call to the UK government to allow all those who are seeking asylum in the UK to have full and equal rights to work (also see, for instance, Hobson et al., 2008, Anonymous, 2009, Gower, 2016, Mayblin, 2016, Waite and Lewis, 2017).

If the government remains intransigent in the face of this call, as the current political climate indicates, then at the very least the policies around what financial assistance people seeking asylum receive should be reviewed. As I noted in Chapters 2 and 7, not only can people be made destitute with no access to funds, or be given no access to cash, the financial situation for those with an application for asylum has worsened since my fieldwork. Not only has the amount of money people receive not gone up with inflation, resulting in a real-time decrease, the situation for families has got considerably worse, with an actual reduction in the amount of money for children. This means that the challenges laid out in this thesis, particularly Chapter 7, will have amplified. Furthermore, people's financial precariousness is only set to continue worsening, with people pushed further into poverty (Allsopp et al., 2014), unless the policy of not increasing asylum support with inflation is reviewed and revoked. I would therefore urge for policies around

financial assistance to be reviewed, for all those who are currently seeking asylum to be entitled to cash support and for this to be in line with other welfare benefits, or at the very least to be at a level where people can meet their basic needs (a level where they do not need to choose between clothes, medicine and food), and that increases are made in line with inflation.

Separately, but nonetheless linked to policy, I think it is also important to note that when Sara was detained with her five-year-old son, the detention was over the 72-hour period that, under most circumstances, children are allowed to be detained for (see Chapters 2 and 5). While I do not know if the Home Office gained ministerial approval for the extension, it seems to me that there was nothing in their circumstances that justifies detention, let alone an extension to this detention (Teather, 2015). When Sara and her son were detained, he did not eat and after his release needed medical attention. Furthermore, he continued to embody the detention; after the release he needed counselling, showing signs of post-traumatic stress (Chapter 7). It seems clear from this research, and indeed many other studies, that any period of detention can have a detrimental effect on people (Crawley and Lester, 2005, Robjant et al., 2009, Vitus, 2010, Jon, 2011, Silverman, 2012, Farmer, 2013, Tyler et al., 2014, Girma et al., 2015, Raven-Ellison, 2015). Therefore, if the government is truly serious about protecting children and ending child detention, it needs to act and re-consider how this policy is being applied and indeed whether a policy that allows any detention of children is ever appropriate or justifiable (also see Stone, 2016).

In Chapter 8, I highlighted the roles groups, asylum organisations and everyday friendships play in supporting people through these precarious times. I therefore want to turn away from policy to briefly think about the small everyday acts that people in the UK can do to try and reduce the precarious condition(s) of those seeking asylum. While building friendships and engaging in groups is not always simple, it did help the women in this study reduce their precariousness, supporting them to both meet their material needs and navigate the asylum process. Furthermore, it also helped them to feel supported (Chapter 8). It therefore seems that if people want to improve the lives of people seeking asylum, it would be beneficial to consider how to engage with asylum advocacy and support projects. In many places in the UK there are schemes that offer spare bedrooms to destitute people, welcoming projects that help people get to know and feel a sense of belonging and informal English classes that try and fill some of the

gaps left by the decreasing funding for ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). Given that, as Chapter 8 illustrated, women can be uncomfortable in mixed gender spaces supporting women-only groups may be of particular value. While doing this, people should recognise the importance of, and respect, the value in self-organising and so should be aware of the effect their presence may have on a space (Chapter 8, also see WAST, 2011). Furthermore, as this study has also shown, support does not always come in the form of formal groups, so everyday acts of friendship can also play a key role in help building “matrices of care and mutual aid” (Katz, 2004; 246) and reducing the precarity of people’s lives. However, receiving a gift or act of support when there is little opportunity to return the favour can be a difficult and emotional process, so ensuring actions are done in ways that consider others’ emotions and that relationships do not become exploitative will be key if these acts are to improve people’s lives (see Chapter 8, Waite and Lewis, 2017).

9.3 Possibilities of Everyday Connections

In this thesis the focus has not been on extraordinary acts of resistance (Katz, 2004); rather it has focused on shared experiences that are embedded in people’s everyday lives - the temporality and scale that geopolitics becomes felt and experienced, where it is lived out but also where people take action (Chapter 1, Pain and Smith, 2008). Therefore, it has also kept open the possibility of resistance. Through focusing on everyday lived realities, the thesis does not remove political potential, but rather explores how acts of reworking or resilience can lay down the groundwork for more transformative acts of resistance. In the section above, I made the case that individuals can work to reduce people’s precariousness through building “matrices of care and mutual aid” (Katz, 2004; 246). Here, I want to refocus to look at how the lens of precarity could provide a way through which to build links across different people in different situations. To do this, I first look at the idea of precarious temporality, developed in this thesis, to consider its geography, before exploring some political possibilities and future options for the study of precarity.

In this thesis, Bourdieu’s (2000) understanding of time and temporality has provided a useful framework, allowing a focus on time as it is experienced, ‘human time’, *time as practice*, as temporalization. I have argued that this experience of time can be read as a precarious temporality, as people have a sense of temporal uncertainty and as they

cannot (or more accurately are limited in how they can) control, or plan for, the future, instead living in a present with little existential value (Chapter 5, Vitus, 2010). However, as temporality is about how we experience time, and time is lived out in space, then precarious temporality is both a temporal and a spatial state. Time and space are “inextricably interwoven”, thus time is inherently geographical (Massey, 1992; 261). The way this precarious temporality is experienced depends on someone’s life history, their identity, social and cultural background, the way time and space has and does interweave in their life. We can see that place matters, as people seeking asylum are not only in a precarious temporality, but a ‘precarity of place’ as through their position as non-citizens they can be removed from the place they reside; they can be ejected from the state (Banki, 2013). Through looking across the experiences of the women in my study, it is clear that precarious temporality, while lived in the present, can also be affected by past experiences, experiences of other timespaces. We can see someone’s experiences stretch globally from the country of origin to the place where someone is claiming asylum. We can see that the place matters. We can see that experiences become etched on the geography of the body, simultaneously stretching out from the bodies on which it occurs to affect other people in other timespaces. As such, the geography of this precarious temporality is one of various (and uneven) “networks of time stretching in different and divergent directions across an uneven social field” (May and Thrift, 2001; 5). Given this, it seems there would be value in further mapping out the geographies of precarious temporalities. This would help to build links between and across people and groups in differing spaces, bring to the fore commonalities that may otherwise be lost in a “welter of difference and inequality”, and open up possibilities for action (Katz, 2004: xiv, also see Katz, 2001).

In this thesis the lens of precarity not only provided a way for me to bring into sharp focus people’s financial situation, the day-to-day practices of shopping and saving, housing conditions and how people feel, cope and survive in these conditions. It also gave me a way through which to map and draw out the political potential in everyday actions. To look at how through education, friendships and asylum groups people could develop social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1999a, 2005), connect, raise consciousness, and learn to respond to, and cope with, the precarities of their lives. However, its potential goes beyond this project. In the context of the asylum system, connecting lives of precarity, mapping out the geographies of precariousness, could open some political possibilities.

Firstly, an emphasis on precarity could draw out commonalities and provide a way to help challenge the divide between ‘citizens’ and ‘non-citizens’. It could allow for a focus on shared experience that, for instance, precarious workers and people seeking asylum have; their shared struggles around the essentials needed to survive – housing, access to food or lack of employment/ lack of the right to employment – and the difficulties in creating a sense of ontological security. As such, it could disrupt the governmental discourse that relies on a division to maintain the ‘foreigner’ as ‘threat’ (Gill, 2009a, Weber and Bowling, 2008). Through developing this shared consciousness, it could draw the attention away from the idea there are ‘genuine’ refugees to be offered sanctuary and ‘bogus’ ‘asylum seekers’ to be ‘ejected’ (Walters, 2004; 249) that justifies decreasing conditions for all people seeking asylum (Darling, 2011). It could shift the focus, so people come to know each other and see people seeking asylum as more than “mere asylum seekers” but intersectional human beings, worthy of support (Gill, 2009b; unpagged, Chapter 8).

Secondly, a focus on precarity offers the opportunity for people seeking asylum to share and draw out links not only between their experiences and others in the UK but across much wider geopolitical contexts. As the UK government looks to other nations for ‘best practice’ on asylum policy, develops shared strategies and engages in a race to the bottom (Geddes, 2000, Green and Grewcock, 2002, Green, 2006, Mountz, 2011), it becomes increasingly important that people seeking asylum in different countries, and geographical contexts develop a shared language through which to articulate their struggles and share experiences of how best to survive within and counter this “institutionalised exclusion” (Carter et al., 2003; 10-11). The language of precarity could link people seeking asylum, academics and activists, not only within one nation but across national borders, offering a tool “for political mobilization of states of exception, mapping transnational linkages between sites where asylum-seekers are policed” and helping to call states to account (Mountz, 2011; 394). As Mountz (2011; 392) notes, there is value in looking to “collective projects [of] contextualize[d] and historicize[d] struggles while seeking alliances and building connections among distinct groups and movements in distinct locations”.

Waite (2009; 413) highlights precarity as different from other terms such as vulnerability “as it also encapsulates [a] political potential” and is used as a central theme by various activists and social justice movements. It has, in some instances, become “a central motif”

in political struggles, providing a “link between people’s different situations under conditions of neoliberalism”, and has maybe even become a “basis for a shared, radical consciousness” (Waite, 2009; 413). It can bring into focus the everyday practicalities and challenges that link people across time and space, through causing people to ask questions about their immediate condition (Bourdieu, 1999b, Vidal et al., 2000, Neilson and Rossiter, 2006, Kalyan, 2013, Batsleer, 2016, Standing, 2016, Ferreri et al., 2017). As such, the language of precarity allows the conversation to move away from extraordinary acts of resistance (Katz, 2004) to begin to build shared consciousness that is embedded in people’s everyday experiences. It brings to the fore mundane and ordinary topics that are nonetheless vital to people’s existence and that might, without the language of precarity, be overlooked or not discussed. Furthermore, as ‘precarity’ is embedded in understandings of the social processes that produce it, this term does not simply recognize the conditions but also the wider geopolitics and how “these social relations are obscured or naturalized in society” (Katz, 2004; 256). This in turn opens up possibilities for resistance that are not embedded in the extraordinary but instead understood through the ordinary everyday struggles people face.

As Lorey (2015; unpagged) has noted, precarity “is not a marginal phenomenon [...] it is rather the rule. It is spreading even in those areas that were long considered secure”. Therefore, it seems important that precarious populations, activists and academics move to track, map and resist, this process. However, in doing this the details of everyday life are central. As this thesis has shown, precarious condition(s) can be understood through an embedded look at mundane and ordinary practices of day-to-day life. It is at the scale of day-to-day life that laws and policies are lived out and it is from this scale that precarity stretches out, affecting and connecting people. The lens of precarity opens up political possibilities to build links across different people in different situations but it does this best by focusing in on the mundane and ordinary elements of day-to-day life.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Project Flyer and Information Sheet

Project Flyer given out at events and to anyone who may be interested in the project. Information sheet given to those who expressed an interest in taking part. The information sheet was also talked through and (re)given to participants during our first meeting.

Project Flyer

Gendered experiences of asylum seekers


UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Are you a woman seeking asylum?

**Do you want to tell people what its like to be a an
asylum seeker in the Leeds area?**

**Would you be willing to give me a tour of where you
live?**

**Would you be happy to meet me about once a month
(for 6 -10 months) and share parts of your day-to-day
life with me?**

If yes, please contact me, Emma Kerry, for more details on
07849 612 449 or **gy11ek@leeds.ac.uk**. or visit my website:
<http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/people/e.kerry>

*I am an independent researcher unconnected to any
agency/organisation, and all information will be anonymous.
You will be reimbursed for any expenses that you incur as the result
of taking part, and will be offered a £30 'thank you' payment for
your time.*

Gendered experiences of asylum seekers

You are being invited to take part in a research project as part of an ERSC 1+3 funded PhD in the University of Leeds Geography department. Before you decide if you want to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You've been asked to take part as a woman who is claiming asylum in the UK.

The project is interested in finding out about women seeking asylum's experiences of the asylum system and the way this affects their day-to-day life in the UK.

What is the project about?

The project looks at gender in the UK asylum system.

This research aims to look at the part gender plays within the lives of people seeking asylum in the UK. It looks particularly at women's experiences, aiming to explore the way they are situated within the process and how their experiences may vary. Through exploring the lives of women it will also examine broader gender dynamics and ideas. The project focuses particularly on people's ordinary day-to-day lives. It looks at what people 'do' on a day-to-day basis, how they interact with other people and how other people interact with them. The research considers what is important to people and how this helps construct a sense of self. It also aims to look at the ways people's understanding of their lives in the UK may shift over time.

What is it I am being asked to do?

You are being asked to meet with the researcher approximately once a month over a 10 month period to talk about and share parts of your normal daily routine with them.

The majority of these meetings will be relatively informal in style. This could be meeting at your home, attending events with you and/or engaging in any other activities that you choose to invite the researcher to. The length of these meetings can vary depending on the nature of the event and the researcher will always do their best to

stay for the entire event. At the beginning of the research you will also be asked to take the researcher on a tour of your home and local area. This is to help the researcher build up a picture of your day-to-day life. During this tour you will be asked to identify places and objects that are of importance to you. We will talk about why they are important and take photos of the objects/sites. Towards the end of the research you will be asked to spend approximately one hour with the researcher looking back at the photos from the photo tour reflecting on how/if things have changed. This can happen at any place that is convenient to you.

What if I don't want to take part in a section of the research or answer a question?

You are allowed to choose to not answer any questions or to not take part in any section of the research.

If there is any section of the research you are not comfortable being a part of then please let the researcher know. In most circumstances it will be possible for you to withdraw from a particular part of the project while still being a participant in the overall research. It may also be possible to adapt the research so as you are comfortable with it. If at any point during the research a topic comes up that you do not wish to discuss, you simply need to let the researcher know and further questions will not be asked on this. You do not have to provide any reason or explanation for your choice.

What will happen to the information I give you?

Your information will be stored confidentially with only me having access to information that could identify you. Your personal information will not be passed on to any other people and you will not be identifiable in any reports, publications or presentations that come out of this research.

Before research is published, put into presentations or shared in anyway it will be made anonymous. Your name will be changed and where necessary, to ensure no one can identify you, other details such as country of origin or current location may also be changed. When taking photos we will aim to exclude identifying details (e.g. faces, names, addresses or personal information). When such details are in photos they will be blurred or cropped-out before photos are used in the research. You will be able to see the photos taken at the end of any meeting and if you are unhappy with any, you can request that they are edited before being included in the research or deleted from the research. Original copies of the photos, interview transcripts and research notes will be kept securely and only access by the researcher. All data will be kept for 10 years after the completion of this project. The project is due to finish on 30/12/2015 but if for any reason the research is stopped, all recordings will be destroyed and only pseudonomised data kept.

Are there any risks to me in taking part in the study?

Sensitive or upsetting topics may be brought up during the research.

If you do feel any discomfort at any point please bring it immediately to the researcher's attention. You can choose to not answer any questions and do not have to give a reason for this. You can also take a break at any time, ask for the subject to be changed or ask if the research could continue on a future date. The researcher can also forward you onto other support and advice services if you feel further support may be helpful.

Are there any benefits to me taking part in the study?

There are no direct benefits to taking part in the study.

The research is not designed to help you directly with your asylum claim but it is hoped that the findings will increase awareness about the situation for asylum seekers in the UK. However, you will be reimbursed for any expenses that you incur as the result of taking part in the study (for instance, travel fares and food or drink purchased). At the end of the study you will also be offered a small £30 'thank you' payment for your time.

Can I change my mind about taking in the study?

***Yes.** It is your choice whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form but you can still withdraw from any or all parts of the study at any time up to the point of publication. You do not need to provide any reason or justification for doing this.*

Contact details:	School of Geography,
Emma Kerry	University of Leeds,
Telephone: 07849612449	Leeds,
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Appendix 2: Table of Participants' Movements and Accommodation Types

	Time in UK at end of study	Known movements and Accommodation Types in the UK Prior to Study	Movements and Accommodation Types During Study Period	Total Known Movements
Hiruni	2 y 8 m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially claimed asylum in a UK city. Briefly sent to London to make claim. Moved to initial accommodation in Wakefield for 6 weeks. Moved to her current location in Leeds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NASS house in Leeds with son throughout the research. 	4
Krishma and Noor	3y 10 m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claimed asylum in London. Moved to initial accommodation in Wakefield for 2 weeks. Moved to her current location in Leeds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NASS house in Leeds with son and daughter throughout the research. 	3
Tharushi	3y 10m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Come to UK to claim asylum. Movements are not known. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NASS house in Leeds with her husband and daughter throughout the research. 	Movements not known
Barkisu	5 y 10 m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moved to the UK with her first husband on his visa. On their separation she was destitute (living on the streets). On claiming asylum, she was initially detained. It is unclear whether where she was housed on her release or what had happened to her after her detention until I met her. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially living with her partner in a flat in Leeds. No financial or other support as she did not pass the 'destitution test' Destitute (and living on the streets) for a few weeks after she left her partner due to domestic abuse. Destitute (and living in charity-provided accommodation in a nearby town) for the last two months of the research period. The charity provided them with accommodation, a food parcel and £10 a week. 	At least 6 (several months are not accounted for)

Rashmi	3y 4m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lived in London on working visa before applying for asylum. Moved to initial accommodation in Wakefield for a week. Moved to her current location in Leeds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NASS house in Leeds with two-year-old child and husband throughout the research. Two months before the end of my research she also had another baby. 	3
Nadia	4y 1m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Came to UK on a visitor's visa (fleeing FGM and an abusive relationship). Lived with friends. When visa ran out she was destitute (living on the streets/at people's houses/ less formal accommodation). Claimed asylum and sent to London. Detained. Unclear what happened to her; she may have been detained more than once and was made destitute at least once before I met her. Moved to charity accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destitute (and living in charity provided accommodation in a nearby town) - The charity provided them accommodation a food parcel and £10 a week. After approximately five months she was moved to Section 4 support -She briefly stayed in a hostel (location unknown) Moved to a shared NASS accommodation in Leeds with four other women all on Section 4 support. 	At least 7 (Several months are not accounted for)
Sara	2y 4m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Came to UK by lorry and claimed asylum in London. Moved to initial accommodation in Wakefield for 1-2 weeks. Moved to NASS house in Leeds (just her and her son). Moved to shared NASS house in Leeds and placed on Section 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In shared NASS house in Leeds and placed on Section 4. Detained for a few days. Returned to same shared NASS house in Leeds and placed on Section 4 (although the other family in house had left). 	5 (Not continuous as she was detained then returned)
Grace	7 y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lived in town in the South of England for 6 years, during which time status is unclear. Moved to initial accommodation in Wakefield for 2 weeks. Moved to NASS house in Leeds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NASS house in Leeds with her 3 children. Revived asylum and given 28 days to move. Found emergency council accommodation (she will need to move when she finds permanent council or other accommodation). 	3