

# A "DARK STORMY FAIRY TALE": EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT WOMEN IN GLASGOW WITH NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

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## ABSTRACT

This study used collage-making and a virtual focus group to explore the impact of the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition on the mental health of women seeking asylum in Glasgow. Research has found that post-migration stressors largely contribute to poor mental health outcomes in people seeking asylum (Solberg et al., 2020). In particular, policies such as no right to work and NRPF push already vulnerable populations further into precarity (Dudhia 2020). This has a distinct effect on migrant women with NRPF who are at increased risk of facing ‘the four D’s’ - disbelief, destitution, detention and deportation (McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas, 2019). Carrying out a thematic analysis, three themes were determined; “My inner self is broken”, “Waiting just kills” and “Dark stormy fairytale”. The findings of this study highlight how the asylum process infringes upon people’s identities, their sense of control over the future as well as belongingness to Scotland. Social support emerged as a critical tool to tackle some of the mental health concerns that prevail as a direct result of the post-migration environment (Salway et al., 2020).

## INTRODUCTION

This research explores the impact that the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition has on the mental health of women in the asylum system using qualitative methods of enquiry. So far, there has been no research of this nature on people seeking asylum in Glasgow, one of the largest dispersal cities in the United Kingdom (UK) (Stewart, 2012). This study addresses this gap by utilising collage-making, an arts-based participatory method used in research carried out by Vacchelli (2018) with migrant women in London.

The aim of the Hostile Environment, a term coined by the then-prime minister Theresa May, is not only to discourage people from claiming asylum in the UK but to make the lives of those who are considered overstayers or irregular migrants difficult by implementing policies limiting their right to work, rent and access healthcare (Qureshi, Morris and Mort, 2020; Yeo, 2018). Subsequently, seeking asylum in the UK has been described by mental health researchers at Kings College London as a “bureaucratic process which determines whether your story has credibility and if your life is truly under threat” (Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence, 2019: 1). One facet of the Hostile Environment is the NRPF condition which bars a variety of people subject to immigration control from accessing welfare benefits and other forms of state support such as housing benefits, child tax credits and disability living allowances (NRPF Network, n.d.; Woolley, 2019). A report by the UN Special Rapporteur referred to the socioeconomic exclusion of migrants, particularly from Black and minoritized ethnic (BME) backgrounds, as increasing the already existent racial disparities that are pervasive in the UK (Achiume, 2019; Dudhia, 2020).

Although the NRPF condition has an adverse impact on all those who are subject to it, it is critical to view these issues through an intersectional lens that recognises the unique experiences of migrant women with insecure immigration status (McIlwaine et al., 2019). McIlwaine and colleagues (2019) highlight four D’s that migrant women with NRPF are at increased risk of facing - disbelief, destitution, detention and deportation. The links between the four D’s and violence against women and girls (VAWG) has also been documented by several third sector organisations, with evidence suggesting

that VAWG is more prevalent for BME and migrant women, particularly those who are destitute and with NRPF (Marsh and Sharma, 2016; McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas, 2019). Compounding these experiences are the daily struggles that people in the asylum system face, such as inadequate and unstable living conditions, uncertainty around the asylum process and determination for their claim as well as interpersonal and systemic racism, as found by several researchers (Miller and Rasmussen, 2010; O’Neill et al., 2019; Satinsky et al., 2019). Further studies have demonstrated how the imposed conditions of the Hostile Environment, such as restrictions on work and finances, removes autonomy and control over basic resources which has been found to have damaging effects on confidence and feelings of self-worth (Dudhia, 2020; Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence, 2019; Morgan, Melluish and Welham, 2017). Furthermore, anxiety around indefinite detention and fear of deportation are considered chronic stressors which may also account for the higher prevalence of mental health conditions amongst those seeking asylum (Morgan, Melluish and Welham, 2017). This is intensified by the narrative perpetuated by the media which stigmatizes people seeking asylum and enables both the economic marginalisation and social isolation of migrant populations (Dudhia, 2020; Odumade and Graham, 2019). Evidently, the design characteristic of the current asylum system puts people at significant risk of poor mental health, experiences of which are exacerbated for migrant women.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s definition of destitution is anyone who has lacked two or more essential items in the past month as well as having little to no savings (Fitzpatrick et al., 2018). These essential items include housing, heating, food, clothing and basic toiletries (Fitzpatrick et al., 2018). Despite people in the asylum system receiving statutory support, the weekly £39.63 payment often fails to cover necessary living costs thus leaving individuals at risk of severe poverty (Dudhia, 2020). The Hostile Environment enforces destitution in this way as a means to incentivize voluntary returns. This is rarely successful as returning to their country of origin is often not considered an option thus leaving many migrant women with few choices, such as homelessness or being locked in abusive relationships (Dudhia, 2020; McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas, 2019; Woolley, 2019). In both scenarios,

research has found that the individual is at increased risk of sexual exploitation, domestic violence or rape (Dudhia, 2020; McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas, 2019; Woolley, 2019). Austerity measures have had a significant toll on the women's sector, with refugees facing cuts of up to seven million pounds since 2010 (Ubuntu Women Shelter, 2020). Consequently, there is an increase of migrant women with NRPF being turned away from services, which contributes to the risk of poverty and violence (Dudhia, 2020; Woolley, 2019). Furthermore, it has been documented by VAWG services such as Women for Refugee Women, Safety4Sisters and Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) that many women with irregular immigration status or who are in the asylum system fear reporting their experiences of sexual violence to the authorities as they are often the ones criminalised rather than the perpetrator (Dudhia, 2020; Marsh and Sharma, 2016; McIlwaine, Granada and Valenzuela-Oblitas, 2019). These experiences of state-sanctioned violence compound and exacerbate poor mental health in migrant women who are already trying to survive complex immigration systems.

The experience of destitution, fuelled by hostile policies such as NRPF, can have devastating consequences on asylum claims. Women already face disbelief from the Home Office as asylum claims rooted in experiences of gender-based violence are poorly assessed due to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention disregarding sex or gender as grounds for seeking refuge. Furthermore, the Home Office has a high threshold of evidence that is required for a claim to be successful and cuts to legal aid has meant that quality legal representation is unobtainable for destitute women with NRPF (Dudhia, 2020). This means that women who are seeking asylum in the UK due to egregious human rights abuses often find themselves without adequate assistance or a fair hearing (Dudhia, 2020).

The growing body of research which documents the experiences of people seeking asylum in the UK rarely focuses specifically on women. Researchers have noted that there are differences in the expression and coping of mental health across genders within the asylum-seeking community and have found that migrant women are more likely to experience poor emotional well-being when compared to men (Campbell et al., 2018; Hoare et al., 2017). In addition to this, there is a lack of qualitative research which centres on the voices of people with lived experience of the asylum system (Hoare et al., 2017). As Dudhia from Women for Refugee Women (2020: 11) observes, "people who seek asylum are rarely presented as human beings with histories and are rarely given the chance to tell their stories to those in government". This research used qualitative methods in an attempt to address this gap in the narrative. Qualitative methods have historically amplified the voices of marginalised groups by documenting the way they "experience phenomena and make sense of the world" (Hoare et al., 2017: 275). In particular, when delving into topics such as mental health, qualitative methods provide the opportunity for women in the asylum system to make sense of their lived reality without their responses to the Hostile Environment being pathologized (Hoare et al., 2017). As such, the purpose of this research is to provide tangible qualitative evidence on the mental health experiences of asylum-seeking women with NRPF in Glasgow which can inform policy change as well as services working closely with this community in a Scottish context.

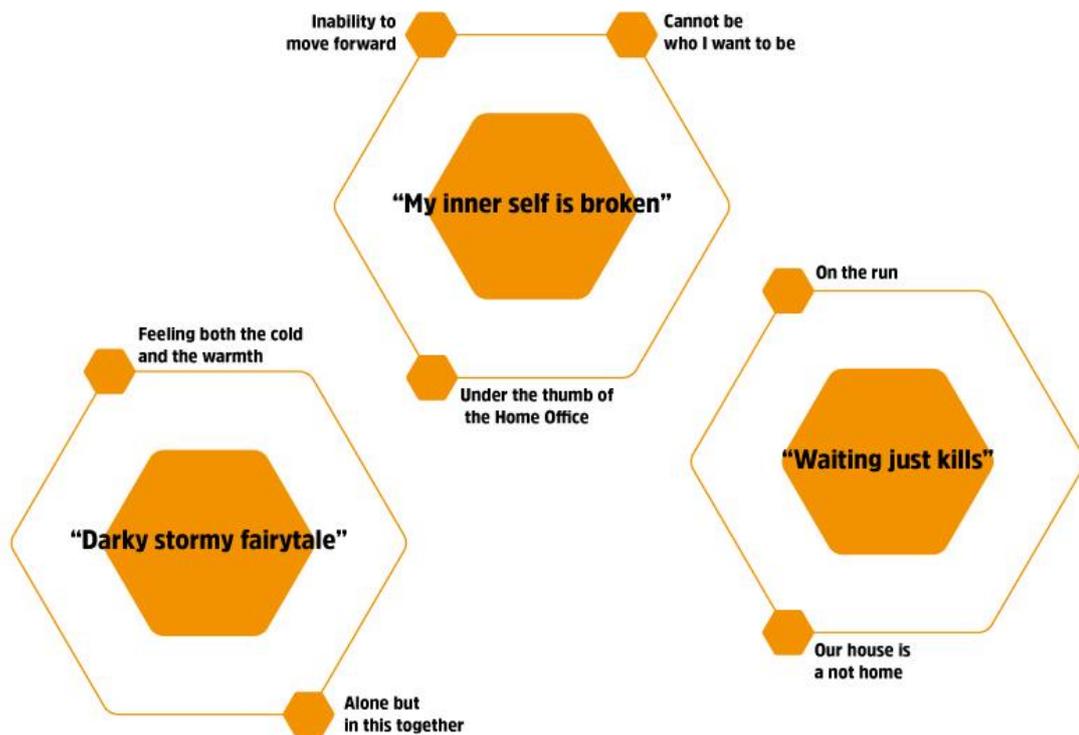
## METHODS

This qualitative enquiry used a mixed-methods approach of collage-making and a virtual focus group. Collage-making is a user-friendly technique which requires cutting up images and

text, as well as various other materials, and gluing them on a surface in order to portray a concept or idea (Butler-Kisber and Poldma, 2009). Collage-making provides a non-invasive and trauma-informed approach to focus groups with vulnerable participants covering potentially challenging topics (Vacchelli, 2018). The physical creation of the collage can be beneficial in allowing the participants to give "form, shape and voice" (Tripp et al., 2019: 513) to their traumatic lived experiences. Such creative processes also place the power in the hands of the participants as they are in control of what and how they choose to communicate, thus taking ownership of their narratives which are often vilified by the media (Jannesari, Molyneux and Lawrence, 2019; Vacchelli, 2018). Doing this in a group setting amongst others was key as sharing experiences can create a "holding space" (O'Neill et al., 2019: 136) where the participants could process the impact of the Hostile Environment on their mental health collectively (Jannesari, Molyneux and Lawrence, 2019).

Participants were recruited using opportunistic sampling from the Ubuntu Women Shelter, a Glasgow-based organisation which supports women with NRPF. Five service users agreed to participate in the research and were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. A pack containing scissors, glue, A3 paper and magazines were delivered to the participants. The participants were given one week to complete a collage depicting how their experiences in the asylum system, specifically in relation to the NRPF condition, impacts their mental health. The participants were offered flexibility in how to engage with the materials provided when creating the collage. Once the collages were completed, the participants met on Zoom to partake in the virtual focus group, which unfortunately one of the women could not attend. The focus group was recorded, transcribed and then subsequently analysed on NVivo (QSR International Ltd, 2020) using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2008). Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method that identifies and interprets "patterns of meaning" in the data (Clarke and Braun, 2017: 297). The pioneers of thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke, argue that it is best suited to participatory and experiential research which centres around the lived experiences of participants (Braun and Clarke, 2008; Clarke and Braun, 2017). As this research question was exploratory, thematic analysis was most suited to this enquiry as it does not aim to answer any specific question but rather allows meaning to be generated both within and across the data (Clarke and Braun, 2017). During the analysis, the data was coded into 51 smaller units of meaning which were then grouped into three overarching themes, with two to three subthemes each (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Thematic map



In conducting this research, it is important to recognise my (the author's) positionality and how it may influence the research process. Although I come from a migrant background, being an Iranian woman by heritage, I am also a British citizen by descent with secure immigration status. This puts me in a position of privilege and creates a hierarchy of power when working with women in the asylum system who do not have such secure immigration status. Furthermore, although the creative production of the data was participatory, Mannay (2016: 52) posits that "the balance of power will be graduated towards the researcher" thus impacting the overall design of the study and subsequent data analysis. To counter this power dynamic, not only were the participants afforded flexibility in how they chose to approach the collage, but the unstructured nature of the focus group meant that the participants also guided the conversation and responded to one another's collages organically with minimal facilitation from myself as the researcher. In addition to this, all quotes in the analysis are in verbatim so as to preserve the participant's authentic voices.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Five women, Ayesha, Angela, Melissa, Afsana and Mariam, participated in collage-making for this research project (See Figures 2 - 6). Three themes were determined in the analysis; the first focuses on identity and how that has shifted since claiming asylum, the second theme centres on the concept of waiting and the third theme looks at the contradiction in their experiences - highlighting both the positives and the negatives.

### Theme 1 "My inner self is broken"

The participants all touched on the ways the asylum system has stripped them of their identity and taken control over their lives.

#### *Cannot be who I want to be*

The participants highlighted how the limited opportunities available to them, as a result of asylum policies, prevent them from being who they want to be. Mariam was a university professor in Yemen yet was told that she has to start her studies from scratch, "When I come here they told me you have to go to college again and I finished the college and I was a teacher in university and they say you have to start again this is, this is kill me [laughs]!". Not only does the inability to work act as a barrier to attaining self-actualization, but limited access to higher education further bars people from achieving their goals and aspirations as described by Ayesha: "because of my residential permanent I'm asylum seeker, and I was not able to you know study in the next level, because I have to pay for that -uhh- thing and, uhh yeah, the funding thing is not covered for asylum seeker". Many of the participants shared similar sentiments of feeling punished for claiming asylum by facing restrictions on their ability to work and study.

#### *Inability to move forward*

Some of the participants referred to the idea of being stuck and unable to move forward, as stated by Melissa: "I feel I'm 'left behind', I am, I'm actually way forward and way ahead, but I am feeling that I'm left behind". Melissa suggests that her potential for self-development is being stunted. Similarly, Ayesha uses an image of a person with their hands bound to reflect how the asylum system renders you stuck without choice and explains that the "first picture show you know she's showing her hand so that means you are stuck, you, you, you, you are not able to do anything". This feeling of being trapped was a common experience shared by the participants.

#### *Under the thumb of the Home Office*

The participants reported feeling they had limited choices to make as the Home Office determines what options are available

to them, as explained by Angela: “I’m sitting empty. Meaning that I’m empty. That I need to be fed most of the time with the information from Home Office. Anything can happen, you are worried but the same time you are empty. So you don’t know what to do. You are just there. You are worried they can knock your door and say it, whatever they want to say because you are under control. You are in control by them, you are not in control yourself”. Fear of the Home Office and a lack of autonomy was further reinforced by Ayesha, “I’m like, you know, some time I sit then I, I feel very hopeless, and you know, like helpless. So I don’t know what’s going on, and if I get, you know, my papers or residential permanent”. Ayesha’s portrayal of the relentless uncertainty around the asylum process further reinforces the lack of control over their situation.

### **Theme 2 “Waiting just kills”**

There was a sentiment shared by the participants that being in the asylum system is like playing a waiting game, leaving people feeling uncomfortable and unsettled.

#### *On the run*

Movement verbs were repeatedly used by the participants to depict their state of restlessness whilst waiting for the determination of their asylum claim. Melissa describes being on the run since leaving Namibia because of the uncertainty surrounding her asylum claim, “since the year 2019, I am still running, I am on the run”. On the other hand, Ayesha feels the urge to run away from spaces where she feels othered, “So I want to run from those spaces where I feel like you know I’m not comfortable or I’m scared so because I’m not you know the residents of this country”. This suggests that Melissa and Ayesha may no longer feel they have to run once they receive the determination of their claim.

#### *Our house is not a home*

The participants shared how they do not feel as though they truly belong in the UK, as demonstrated by Ayesha, “after eight year I still feel like I’m, you know, I’m not, I don’t know uhhh, whenever I feel like this is my country, this is my house, this is my place I don’t know”. Lack of ownership over their space is compounded by the financial constraints of the NRPF policy which restricts people from investing into their lives, as expressed by Mariam who described how “in my situation, I want to buy a new fridge but I say when I get my paper I will buy the new fridge, because now it’s not my home, it’s not, it’s not and this ca- this waiting it’s killed”. Being stuck in a transitory state where nothing is permanent creates discomfort. Melissa shares how “there is a lot of discomfort whether you have it, all these thing you have or you need, but it is still not yours, because one day, you can leave it or you can lose it so it’s not yours... there’s a lot of discomfort”. Regardless of the material possessions they may have, Melissa explains how even these material items lack permanence in their lives. Similarly, depending on the outcome of their claim, the participants may not live permanently in the UK either.

### **Theme 3 “Dark stormy fairy tale”**

The participants expressed a duality in their experiences – recognising both the positive and negative aspects of their lives in Glasgow.

#### *Feeling both the cold and the warmth*

Although negative emotions are common for people navigating the asylum system, the participants also recognised that there are some factors in their environment that contribute to feelings of safety and security. This was demonstrated by Angela who

shared that she is “very happy where I am...secure. I don’t sleep with, eh empty, I mean empty stomach. I’m always full, food is available, but then the other side of my -uhh uh uh uh - of me I’m sad because you never know what’s going to happen today or tomorrow. I’m scared all the time what the outcome will be. So, most of the time and I’m, I’m, I’m scared”. Melissa uses the analogy of a “dark stormy fairy tale” to refer to her experience of the asylum system, thus reinforcing the dichotomy of the good and bad of their situation, “I am in a ‘dark stormy fairy tale’, which I am in. It’s a good thing, I am in a good country, I am having a better government and a good government - better than my government so, but it is a dark fairy tale for me. It’s stormy”.

The participants often used the weather to describe the darkness of their situation, as demonstrated by Mariam who created an image of herself using blue cut-outs to represent her anxiety, “this woman it’s, it’s me actually. And the blue side inside me I, I tried to make it like a ice, a ice woman, I tried to make it like ice woman...if you understand the feeling of the anxiety, this feeling it’s make you feel cold most of the time, very cold from inside”. The coldness that is being depicted in Mariam’s collage is in direct opposition to the warmth felt from local Glaswegians which Angela describes, “Glasgow is the most wonderful place to be, people are very warm. Everywhere you go, even if you, you miss- lost where you wanted to go, they will give way for you. It’s a wonderful place”. Several of the participants also described Glaswegians as friendly and kind thus being at odds with the coldness of the government’s policies.

#### *Alone but in this together*

Feeling isolated was a common experience for the participants however, they also recognised the value of peer support groups. Ayesha used an image of a person sat in an empty cinema to depict her loneliness, “I can feel some time, you know, I am not able to relate myself in here like it’s someone, I feel diff- I’m different from, you know, someone wherever I go, in GP, where I want, I have to, where I have to mention my, you know, residency, like I am asylum seeker, I, I personally not feeling good, I personally feel like I am different from the other people and I am alone”. Ayesha’s loneliness results from feeling othered and fearing being judged because of her asylum status.

Melissa discusses how being in the asylum system can often mean that it is difficult to make time for other people, thus feeding into her loneliness, “Like times you feel like you, you have time for no one because of the situation we are in. And then you feel like pretending. You have to pretend, because if I’m sad, ‘Why are you sad?’, the many questions is coming. ‘Why are you sad?’”. To hide such a big part of one’s experience can feel isolating but, as Angela shares, being in a group with others in similar situations offers a release from these internalised feelings, “Now I’m having another session that I never met before which, which, which, which bring your, your sickness out and be transform you to another person. Because the moment you are portraying ourselves in this way, it always give you a freedom so you are not alone”. Angela describes how sharing their vulnerabilities in a group setting is liberating, thus reinforcing the cathartic nature of shared experiences. Evidently, the focus group created a space whereby solidarity could be found amongst others who are also having to navigate the bureaucracy of the Hostile Environment.

**Figure 1**

*Ayesha's collage*



**Figure 2**

*Angela's collage*

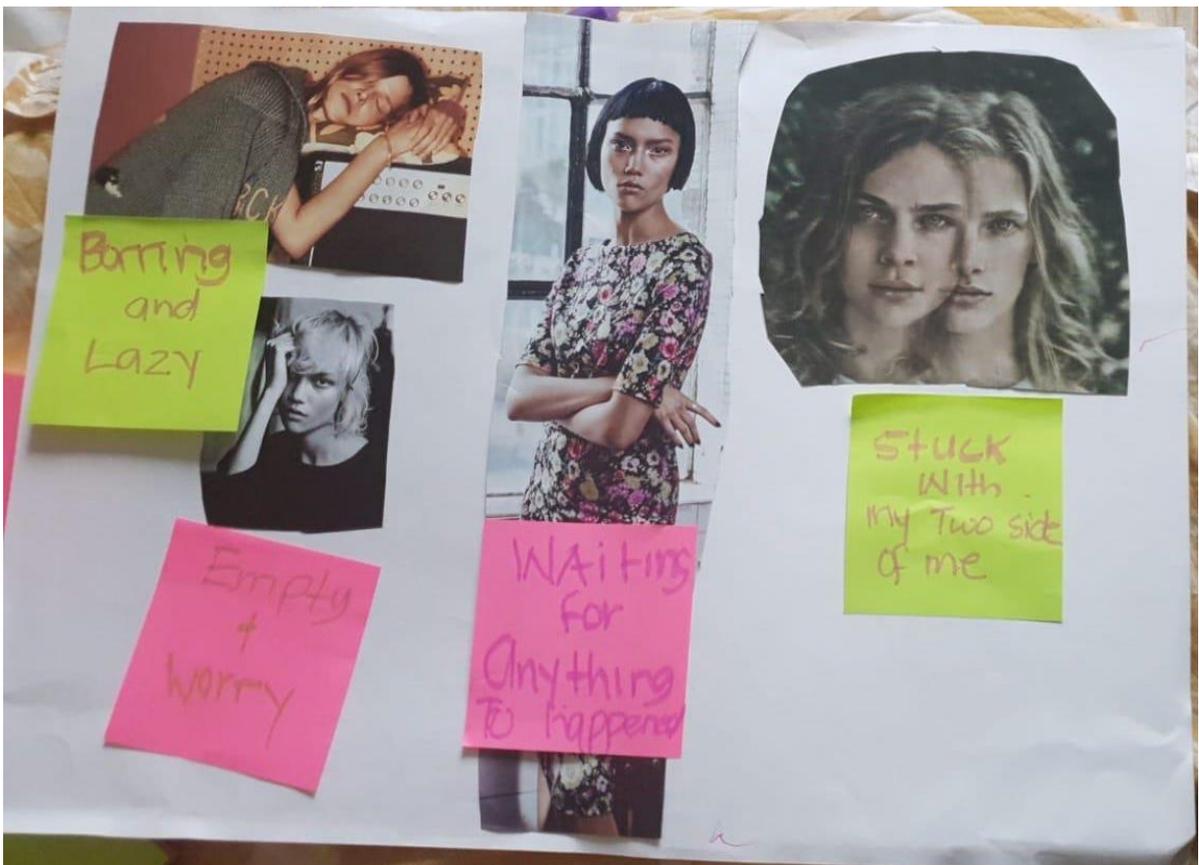




Figure 5

Mariam's collage



## DISCUSSION

This research used collage-making to initiate a conversation around how the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition impacts the mental health of women in the asylum system in Glasgow. Through thematic analysis, three themes were determined; “My inner self is broken”, “Waiting just kills” and “Dark stormy fairytale”. The women did not focus specifically on the impact of the NRPF condition but instead spoke at length about their general experiences under the Hostile Environment. This may have been because the participants focused on the limitations of the asylum support that they are recipients of rather than the support they do not have access to. This discussion will explore the three themes and conclude with suggestions for local organisations as well as future researchers to consider.

### Losing a sense of oneself

The moment a person claims asylum they are labelled according to their legal immigration status. This change in identity to one which is defined entirely by what one can and cannot do legally (Douglas, 2010) results in what Hartonen et al. (2021) refer to as ‘status dissonance’; the inconsistency between one’s belief of their social status and their current material possessions. This was demonstrated by the participants who shared how the limitations of the imposed financial restrictions bar them from studying, seeking work and thus gaining an income. Research has found that limitations on the right to work and lack of recognition for prior qualifications results in poor mental health outcomes in migrant populations (Li, Liddell and Nickerson, 2016). In particular, people who attained a high level of education and had an established career in their country of origin showed significantly worse mental health outcomes post-migration which can be attributed to a loss of socioeconomic status (Li, Liddell and Nickerson, 2016). For many people identity is closely tied to their profession, meaning that an inability to continue on their desired career path as a result of restrictive policies can result in feeling a loss of identity and low self-esteem (Popescu, 2016). This was highlighted by Mariam who was told that she would have to repeat her studies regardless of her prior qualifications and career as a university professor. Being allowed to secure employment and thus gain financial autonomy has been recognised as a means to combat these distressing factors because it allows people to construct meaning in their life (Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence, 2019; Popescu et al., 2016).

Another dimension to the loss of identity experienced post-migration is an inability to plan the future, which is a fundamental part of the human experience (Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence, 2019). Not being afforded any control over the future is associated with losing a sense of oneself (Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence, 2019). The participants in this study expressed feeling helpless as the Home Office has control over their lives and decides which life paths are permissible for them (Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence, 2019).

### Sitting in limbo

People in the asylum system have referred to the lengthy asylum process as “diplomatic torture” (Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence, 2019: 7). Rotter (2016) refers to such waiting as bureaucratically induced torture as there is no end-date provided for the decision on their claim or subsequent appeals. The waiting period of the asylum process is often filled with rumination and worry about the future (Hartonen et al., 2021) which is further compounded by limitations on work and study as it leaves people in the asylum system ‘sitting in limbo’. Horst and Grabska (2015) argue that radical uncertainty, the inability

to gain certainty as a result of open-ended possibilities, is used as a tactic by the state to maintain governance over people with undetermined asylum claims, resulting in this “torturous” system (Rotter, 2016). The insecurity and fear that is induced as a result of waiting heightens psychological stress amongst asylum-seeking populations (Horst and Grabska, 2015), with research evidencing how a protracted length of time in the asylum system predicts higher rates of depression and anxiety (Li, Liddell and Nickerson, 2016), and increases the risk of developing PTSD (Aragona et al., 2020). The waiting period is also reflective of a disruption of their life trajectory, leaving people in the asylum system in liminal situations where they are stuck in transition between the past and the future (El-Shaarawi 2015; Horst and Grabska, 2015; Rotter, 2016). Participants in Hartonen and colleague’s study (2021) described this phase of their life as being stuck in between heaven and hell, similar to the “dark stormy fairytale” that Melissa depicted in her collage.

### Belonging to Scotland

The lack of permanence that defines the asylum process also impacts the participant’s sense of belongingness to Scotland as the host country. Cultural bereavement is a term that describes the responses of displaced peoples in the face of extreme social loss, such as their social structures and their cultural values (Eisenbruch, 1991). The unpredictability of the future means that people in the asylum system are unable to truly settle in their environment as, according to consultant clinical psychologist Anne Douglas, they do not know “how to position themselves in relation to the host country” (2010: 240). In particular, a disruption in their social network results in loneliness, a prevalent social determinant of mental health outcomes amongst people seeking asylum (Hynie, 2018; Quinn, 2014). Research has documented the association between loneliness and symptoms of depression and anxiety amongst migrant populations, thus reinforcing the role that post-migratory environments play in the mental health outcomes of people seeking asylum (Aragona et al., 2020; Silove et al., 1997).

Loneliness is exacerbated by asylum policies that restrict access to the labour market and higher education, resulting in people spending considerable time isolated in their accommodation (Murphy and Vieten, 2020). Furthermore, people in the asylum system already feel low self-esteem and lack confidence which thwarts their ability to socialise and make connections with others (Salway et al., 2020). The Home Office further contributes to social isolation through the narratives perpetuated in the mainstream media which ‘others’ people in the asylum system (Jannesari, Molyneaux and Lawrence, 2019; Salway et al., 2020). This was demonstrated by Ayesha who admitted feeling ashamed when having to disclose her asylum status, suggesting that this stigmatised label contributes to feelings of low self-esteem.

### Increasing access to social support

Policy change can mitigate the impact of social isolation not only by increasing access to the labour market but also increasing availability of, and funding towards, social support (Episkopou et al., 2019; Sengoelge et al., 2020). Recent research found that shared-identity social support groups positively impacted social interactions and increased social ties amongst migrant communities (Salway et al., 2020). This is because such groups create a reciprocal and affirming environment where people can learn from each other’s experiences and offer advice to one another, both of which are associated with increased self-worth and self-confidence (Salway et al., 2020). Connecting over shared experiences in this way is also understood to help rebuild a collective identity (Block et al., 2018). The women in this study referred to the

focus group as a supportive and validating space therefore, the findings of this research contribute to the evidence that social support plays an important role in mitigating the impact of post-migratory stressors on mental health (Sengoelge et al., 2020).

### CONCLUSION

This study contributes invaluable insight into the lived experiences of migrant women navigating the Hostile Environment in Glasgow specifically. The findings highlight how the asylum process infringes upon people's identities, their sense of control over their lives as well as belongingness to the host country. Social support was reinforced as a key tool in

combatting policies such as NRPF that perpetuate poor mental health amongst migrant communities. It would be useful for future research to include women who are subject to NRPF but who are not in the asylum system in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of those living in the margins of our society. Moving forwards, studies should also aim to include non-English speaking participants whose language automatically puts them in a more vulnerable position (Hynie, 2018). Research centring on the lived experiences of people on the receiving end of restrictive and hostile policies is instrumental in combating the exclusionary politics that perpetuates poor mental health amongst migrant communities.

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