

**Collective Resistance as a Means to Healing. A Collective  
Narrative Participatory Project with Black and Ethnic Minority  
LGBT Refugee & Asylum-Seeking People.**

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## 1. ABSTRACT

The number of people in exile is rising. Forced migrant populations often navigate treacherous journeys, experiences of losses, and hostile realities in reception countries. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) refugee and asylum-seeking people present with special psychological and socio-economico-political challenges; yet little is still known about how services can support their healing. Existing literature investigating resilience and wellbeing cartographies in this population is sparse and has neglected to examine collective understandings of resources, alongside the performative aspects of local resistances. Hoping to offer valuable insights into how we can all ethically stand by this population's needs, this study endorsed a collective narrative participatory design, to explore collective ways of resisting oppression amongst BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people, through concerning itself with how such stories can be constitutive of healing.

A social constructionist epistemology was appropriated. Purposeful sampling procedures were pursued in collaboration with a London-based charitable organisation to locate suitable participants. Data comprised participants' story-telling, as captured over two sequences: individual and collective. Story-telling was aided through the co-construction of a novel metaphor: 'The Passport of Life'. 'Narrative Analysis' was employed for the processing of the data, the direction of which was co-shaped with participants.

Findings indicate that participants' (collective) story-telling is crafted as a site for resistances to emerge and be re-affirmed. Resistance pathways are inextricably linked to participants' diverse subjectivities, reflecting respective opportunities and constraints. Participants' narrativisation of their intersectional subjectivities mirrors their multiple contextual realities and is indicative of an 'ever-becoming' process that challenges the fixedness of borders and dominant western identity conventions. Healing is constituted as a dynamic process, bound by discursive and physical configurations of spaces of togetherness and belonging, which have re-definitional, hope-inducing, and social justice properties. The results also support the use of participatory, narrative, and creative means (e.g. metaphors) for expanding people's (untold) stories and supporting opportunities for healing and social justice.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

The number of people fleeing their homelands to escape war, conflict, persecution, discrimination, famine, and climate change is on the rise. As of 2019, 70.8 million people have been forcibly displaced (UNHCR, 2019). Amongst them, 25.9 million are refugees and 3.5 million are seeking asylum (UNHCR, 2019). Research on the issues affecting people, fleeing on the grounds of persecution due to their sexuality and gender, is sparse. Little is still known about BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people's developmental journeys and ways that they negotiate multiple identities and promote wellbeing (Alessi, 2016; Higgins & Butler, 2012).

The present study seeks to gain insight into this population's experiences of collective resistance within the context of their journey into exile and beyond. In this chapter, I will first explore this thesis' conceptual foundations and will subsequently review some of the key challenges that forcibly displaced people, especially those who identify as LGBT, experience through their journeys. I will then critically engage with the relevant literature on BME LGBT forcibly displaced people's resilience and wellbeing. This review will provide the rationale for the aims of this study.

### 2.1. Positioning

Situating myself to this project, I reflect on my identities and experiences, which shaped my interest in conducting this research. Growing up in Greece, I have born witness to the perils of people risking their lives to cross into Europe, hoping for safety and a better future. I have felt powerless and despondent by the global dehumanising discourse pertaining to refugee people's existences and have become alert to the many political forces that render some crossings as welcome (e.g. EU freedom of movement) and others as a threat. Being an EU migrant in Brexit Britain, I have become curious about how socio-politico-cultural forces construct othering and expose the temporality of rights. Thus, I wonder about *what* rights, *whose* rights, and *when* rights.

My specialist interest in LGBT crossings reflects my personal and professional readings of belonging and identity. Personally, being able to maintain a safe affiliation to my cultural and familial contexts, I have become interested in how LGBT forced migrant people construct their sense of belonging in the context of, as we shall see, threatening familial and/or societal transactions. I have also grown passionate about observing the contextual readings of one's sexuality both within and across cultures and geographies. This interest is informed by my understanding of gendered sexualities as context-mediated continua (Butler, 2006; Foucault, 1998), which has very much been impacted on by my personal experiences. Where I grew up, gender and sexuality were often conflated, determining and being determined by one another. In that context, not being able to embody stereotypical masculine behaviours and interests meant that my sexuality was misconstrued. Thus, I grew interested in considering why and how some identities are made possible and others not and its variance across contexts.

Positioning myself alongside LGBT refugee and asylee people as an ally might offer possibilities for documenting stories of strength and suffering. However, amongst others, being in a heterosexual relationship introduces power imbalances that need to be thought about through a superordinate framework to mitigate their impact. In this text, therefore, I place research with this population within a human rights context (Mahtani, 2003; Patel, 2003,2009). This invites a moral positioning, seeing LGBT crossings as a humanitarian issue. Jacobsen and Landau talk about researchers' "dual imperative" (2008:185), which amalgamates to an intention to produce high-quality and impactful research, whilst paying homage to forced migrant people's experiences. This kind of research should have as its ultimate objective the alleviation of human agony (Turton, 1996). These comprise the values that have guided this project.

## **2.2. Defining Terms**

In this section, I will be drawing on texts produced within human rights, sexual, and gender affirmative contexts to lay the conceptual frameworks that were available to me in shaping the way that the terms 'refugee', 'asylum-seeking', BME, and 'LGBT' are understood in this text.

### 2.2.1. Refugee and Asylum-seeking Context

*'Refugee' people:* In its legal definition a 'refugee' person resides in international territory "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR, 1951:14). Refugee people's political status is protected by international law.

However, resettlement opportunities are mediated by domestic regulations. In the UK, people are granted refugee status after their asylum claim has been processed by the Home Office (APPG on Refugees, 2017). Resettlement opportunities may also be available to vulnerable populations, who temporarily reside in international territory and/or are detained in a refugee camp via a series of Gateway schemes (UNHCR, 2018). Refugee people have the right to live in the UK for five years, after which they can reapply for indefinite leave to remain.

*Asylum-seeking person:* Is conceptualised as someone who has fled their country of origin in pursuit of protection but whose 'refugee status' has not yet been granted (Castles, 2006). In the UK alone, 35,566 asylum applications were filed in 2019, with 52% of claims resulting in leave to remain (Refugee Council, 2020). Asylum can be claimed either at the border, at the time of arrival, or at the asylum registration office in Croydon, followed by a cumbersome, inefficient, inhumane, and prone to false negatives determination process (Freedom From Torture, 2019), resulting in 9,625 appeals having been registered in 2019 alone (Refugee Council, 2020).

A perhaps more politically neutral descriptor used synonymously to the previous terms is that of 'forced migrant' or 'forcibly displaced person' (Castles, 2006); hereafter used interchangeably with the terms refugee and asylum-seeking people, cautioning against reductionist assumptions when such labels are utilised as all-encompassing identity statements (Patel, 2003).

The cross-national variation in the terminology used to denote which *bodies* are casted as refugees and, therefore, in need of protection, and which are regarded as 'migrants', is inscribed within particular socio-politico-economic agendas. Luibheid (2008) posits that states act through domestic procedures to determine the

desirability of foreign *bodies* based on the intersections of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and race.

### 2.2.2. 'Race' and Intersectionality

*BME*: Providing a comprehensive overview of how racialised and ethnically diverse populations are cited in the UK is out of this thesis' scope. The term BME is critically employed here to refer to people who identify as 'Black' or 'Brown' and/or those who define themselves by their membership to a minority ethnic group (Aspinall, 2002). As all nomenclatures, the term is biased in assuming an artificial level of in-group homogeneity, neglecting intra-group diversity and, thus, reproducing othering rhetoric (Gunaratnam, 2003). It is also constructed in juxtaposition to 'Whiteness', falsely constructing the latter as the norm (Wood & Patel, 2017). Parekh (2000) posits that the term might suggest inferiority, which is unethical and misleading. To mitigate othering biases, I adopt an intersectional lens throughout this project.

*Intersectionality* refers to the diversity of one's experience, bound by their membership in privileged and disadvantaged groups (Crenshaw, 1991). That is, that one's identities are not seen as separate, but as merging to constitute their unique experience of the world and their selves in it (Cole, 2009). Therefore, intersectionality provides a platform, whereby connections between race, ethnicity, and power can be fostered, in ways that the BME acronym obscures. 'Race' here is understood as a construction denoting valued societal norms, inscribed upon skin colour differences (Wood & Patel, 2017), whereas ethnicity points to shared ancestral and cultural lineage. An intersectional analysis permits the understanding of BME subjectivities (used throughout as a shorthand) in conjunction with the impress of power, which becomes an apparatus for marginalising non-white people. The intersectionality of race with sexuality and gender shapes additional layers of precarity and exclusion, the documentation of which is at the heart of this thesis.

### 2.2.3. Gender and Sexuality

*Gender identity*: Is defined as "a person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else" (American Psychological Association [APA], 2011:1), whilst the ways one embodies their gender identity is described as 'gender expression' (APA, 2011). Davies and Barker (2015) propose that gender identification is impacted on

by one's cultural context, challenging the heteronormative assumption of linearity between one's sex (determined by one's genitalia at birth, classified as male, female, intersex -having both male and female biological features) and gender. This gives rise to various constellations of subjectivities located in specific socio-cultural and historic spaces, suggesting that gender identity is bound by complex and dynamic transformative systems (Butler, 2006; van Anders, 2015). Some of those gender configurations are unique in specific cultures and their meaning is exclusively produced in those contexts (i.e. 'two-spirit' people in the Native American context [Jacobs, Thomas, & Lang, 1997]).

*Sexual orientation:* Referred by APA as "an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes" (2008:1). Orientation is often used interchangeably with the term *sexuality*, which may encompass one's sense of 'self' based on the emotional or sexual attraction to members of the same, the opposite, or both sexes (APA, 2008; Davies & Neal, 1996). The ways that we understand sexual orientation in the West has been influenced by Kinsey and colleagues' work, proposing three distinct dimensions: heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhart, 1953). Heterosexuality refers to one's desire of the opposite sex, homosexuality describes an attraction to the same sex and bisexuality suggests an intimate attraction to both male and female sexes.

*LGBT:* The acronym describes sexual and gender diverse populations (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) and is an acceptable terminology (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2019). The term 'lesbian' is often used to refer to women who are intimately attracted to women, whilst 'gay' suggests sexual attraction to men by men, with the term 'bisexual' denoting attraction to both sexes by both sexes (APA, 2008,2012). 'Transgender'<sup>1</sup> is an 'umbrella' category for people, whose gender identity and associated behaviours do not correspond with the normative expectations associated with their assigned at birth sex (APA, 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> The opposite being 'cisgender'.

Despite the continuity assumption in Kinsey's theorising, sexuality is seen in ways that imply qualitatively distinct and fixed categorical classifications (Davies & Neal, 1996), determined by one's gender and sex, which are also assumed to be static and consistent through time (Barker, 2019). This does not only obscure the dynamic inter-relationship between sex and gender and the diversity of its expression (Men who have Sex with Men [MSM], Women who have Sex with Women [WSW]) but who may not identify as LGBT [Barker, 2019]), but also fails to legitimise the influence of contextual factors in the formation, expression, and evolution of one's sexuality (Barker, 2019; Diamond, 2016; Katz-Wise, 2015). As UNHCR highlights, "sexual orientation and gender identity are broad concepts which create space for self-identification" (2012:3). In this text, I draw on Queer theory to reflect on the means for self-identification that are available to LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people in the complex socio-politico-economic and cultural contexts that they navigate. 'Queer' has emerged as an 'umbrella' term, which deconstructs the heteronormative assumptions of binary identifications, proposing a more fluid and contextual conceptualisation of what is to be a man, woman, LGBT, straight, and more (Sullivan, 2003).

Barker (2019) encourages the adoption of Gender, Sexuality and Relationship Diversity (GSRD) talk, which depicts more accurately the fluidity and diversity evident in real-world gendered sexualities. Whilst I consider this language to be more inclusive of difference, I will be using LGBT as an umbrella lexicon, interchangeably with queer, to mirror published literature, and respect the language that is available to refugee and asylum-seeking people, who identify with a gender and/or sexual diversity discourse, to support their asylum claim; albeit, this language does not reflect the diversity of experiences in non-western contexts (Ekine, 2013).

### **2.3. Mapping the Effects of 'Refugee Trauma'**

The flux of populations moving towards seemingly safer environments – interestingly branded as 'refugee crisis' – has tested many of the post-World War humanitarian ideals. Forced migration has been heavily politicised and sensationalised (Krzyzanowski, Triandafyllidou, & Wodak, 2018); with the current global socio-political zeitgeist swinging towards xenophobic and nationalist attitudes

(Consterdine, 2018). These often translate into unethical practices, unwelcoming facilities, limited post-resettlement opportunities, and an overall reluctance by governmental bodies to mind refugee and asylum-seeking people's welfare (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2001, 2019; Roberts, Murphy, & McKee, 2016).

Forcibly displaced people are fleeing precarious situations, including human rights abuses, life-threatening geopolitical conditions (Neumayer, 2005), torture, violence, and rape (Patel & Mahtani, 2007; Vu et al., 2014). Many have lost family members and supportive social structures that shield against further suffering and abuse at post-resettlement (Liebling, Burke, Goodman, & Zasada, 2014; UNHCR, 2003).

The experiences described above have been associated with adverse psychosocial trajectories. There is an increased life-span prevalence of common mental health disorders, post-trauma stress and suicidal ideation amongst refugee people (Ao et al., 2016; Kien et al., 2018; Turrini et al., 2017), with emerging evidence underlining its intergenerational effects (Bryant et al., 2018). Worse outcomes are reported for people seeking asylum and people with rejected applications (Morgan, Melluish, & Welham, 2017). Furthermore, detention practices have been associated with higher rates of post-trauma stress (Robjant, Hassan, & Catona, 2009), which is alarming given the all-increasing number of detainees, following restrictive European migration policies (HRW, 2019).

Indeed, there is evidence that post-migration stressors may be a more accurate predictor of psychosocial difficulties at post-resettlement than pre-displacement trauma (Carswell, Blackburn, & Barker, 2011; Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans, & Asic-Kobe, 2011). Post-migration stressors comprise indices that include isolation, uncertainty, restrictive policies, hostile reception, asylum-related challenges, structural inequalities, and racial violence (Kirkwood, McKinlay, & McVittie, 2013; Liebling et al., 2014; Morgan et al., 2017; Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012). Failing to acknowledge the challenges that forcibly displaced people encounter in reception countries risks falsely idealising 'welcoming' states, and thus pathologising distress through locating it solely on pre-migration experiences (Papadopoulos, 2001, 2002).

It is worth noting, however, that there is substantial variation across studies regarding the prevalence of mental health distress amongst forcibly displaced people

(see Steel et al., 2009). This may also be explained by ingroup differences, the limited trans-cultural applicability of Western outcome measures, and the over-reliance on value-laden constructs (see Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD], Summerfield, 2002,1999) to describe complex experiences.

Notwithstanding methodological and clinical challenges, attending to forcibly displaced people's distress constitutes a humanitarian imperative, requiring a public health response (Jefferies, 2018; Sara & Brann, 2018). Nevertheless, the dissemination of preventative and restorative interventions has been limited and with varied effectiveness (Fazel & Betancourt, 2018; Thompson, Vidgen, & Roberts, 2018; Tribe, Sendt, & Tracy, 2017; Van Wyk & Schweitzer, 2014). Amongst others, the applicability of mainstream psychological aid may be compromised by its power-infused Eurocentric premises and its homogenising discourse (Mahtani, 2003; Patel, 2003,2019). In support of psychologists' practice, guidelines urge attention to intra-group differences and particularly the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality that produce unique refugee trajectories (BPS, 2018a).

## **2.4. Sexual and Gender Minority Forcibly Displaced People**

### **2.4.1. A Dimensional Approach**

To date, same-sex relationships are criminalised in 70 countries (ILGA, 2019). Following recent unfavourable domestic regulations in Africa (SMUG, 2014), it is likely that the number of people fleeing persecution based on their LGBT status will increase. Arguably, this population presents with needs that require special merit (Hopkinson, et al., 2016).

In this narrative review, I will be adapting Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), to consider this population's experiences based on three dimensions: the different aspects of the exile journey, as articulated by Ager (1999); across the multiple systems within which such acts are performed, including a superordinate historical context; and through an intersectional lens (Appendix, A). It is worth noting, that the analysis that I am attempting here is not exhaustive, better serving as a conceptual framework than a guiding model, and limited by published literature, reflecting predominantly refugee and asylum-seeking gay men's experiences



(Luibhéid, 2019). This may be partly due to cultural and gender-based attitudes, which contribute to the historic oppression of lesbian women, bisexual and transgender people, restricting their access to the public sphere.

#### *2.4.1.1. The pre-flight context*

Perhaps the most pervasive feature of LGBT displaced people's experience is the fear of persecution (Alessi, Kahn, & Van Der Horn, 2016). Persecution is instigated by familial and community circles, the church, and/or the state, and includes physical attacks, imprisonment, police harassment, sexual violence, torture, and death (Heller, 2009; Hopkinson et al., 2016; LaViolette, 2009; Miles, 2010; UNHCR, 2011). Lesbian women are more at risk of being raped (Piwowarczyk, Fernandez, & Sharma, 2016), and/or forcibly impregnated, as sexual violence gets neutralised within a 'rectifying abnormal sexualities' discourse (UNHCR, 2011). Young boys also suffer sexual violence (Alessi, Kahn, & Chatterji, 2016), with formative developmental effects (Higgins & Butler, 2012).

Persecution may result in self-preservation strategies such as 'covering', defined as one's act of concealing their sexual and gender identities (Yoshino, 2006). This may lead to experiences of denial, shame, identity confusion, and/or self-hatred, as readily available homophobic narratives get internalised (Alessi & Martin, 2017; Berg & Millbank, 2009). Loss also pertains the individual experience, pointing to feeling rejected by and disconnected from the dominant culture (Reading & Rubin, 2011). It may also be related to incidents of deadly homophobic attacks against friends and/or romantic partners, the processing of which is subsequently hindered by silencing (Pepper, 2005). Silencing occurs within familial/societal, statutory, as well as cultural contexts with individuals being left to suffer in secrecy.

On proximal and distal levels, sexual and gender diverse people face discrimination, isolation, the complete breakdown of connections, and state-sponsored abuse. Six UN-member states punish same-sex sexual acts with the death penalty, being an option in another five (ILGA, 2019). The state fails not only to uphold people's rights in law and/or policy but is also the main instigator of violence and degrading treatment (Alessi et al., 2016). This includes obstructing access to adequate health care and education and prohibiting all kinds of community organisation (Amnesty

International, 2008). Thus, covering permeates the social system in such ways that any forms of connectivity and solidarity are stunted, constituting distress alongside the insidious erosion and erasure of affirmative contexts, for one to make sense of their forming sexual and gender identities (Root, 1992).

These acts of violence are fed by, and feed into, a discursive reality, which depicts same-sex attraction as abnormal, outcasted, and shameful (Georgis, 2013; Giametta, 2014). Cultural and religious attitudes towards morality, gender and sexual norms, such as the social position of female *bodies*, the stereotypical portrayal of what is to be masculine, and the reproductive nature of sexual activity (Alessi et al., 2016; Ombagi, 2019), are endorsed by cultural agents and enacted, in such ways that are detrimental to sexual minorities' survival (Miles, 2010).

#### *2.4.1.2. The flight context*

The decision to leave one's country is often unplanned and precipitated by the threat of exposure, violence, imminent arrest, the death of one's friends, and/or partners, and familial persecution (Higgins & Butler, 2012; Miles, 2010; Pepper, 2005). Journeys are often precarious, fraught with social isolation, and may result in death (Lee & Brotman, 2011; Shakhsari, 2014; Tribe, 1999). Crossing borders is often marked by state-induced homophobic abuse and financial destitution leading to sexual exploitation (Cowen, Stella, Magahy, Strauss, & Morton, 2011; ORAM, 2009). Moreover, the absence of strong protection and care systems (Rumbach & Knight, 2014), alongside being held at detention centres, places this population at a greater risk of sexual violence (Tabak & Levitan, 2013). Through challenging dominant cultural practices (e.g. being unaccompanied by male figures), risk of harm may be amplified for lesbian and transgender women (ORAM, 2009; Shakhsari, 2014).

#### *2.4.1.3. Temporary resettlement*

May also be referred to as the asylum-seeking stage (Patel, 2003). LGBT asylum-seeking people are often met with hostility in reception countries, whilst having to navigate complex asylum procedures (Cragnolini, 2013; Jansen, 2013). In the UK, the burden of proof rests with people themselves, who must prove the genuineness of their sexuality in a 'forced coming out' process marked by intrusive questioning with re-traumatising effects (Lee & Brotman, 2011). Re-traumatisation is reinforced

by the emphasis on people's personal narrative as the main site of jurisdiction. Berg and Millbank (2009) highlight the limitations of such practices, considering the effects of psychological sequelae, victimisation, and officials' construction as threatening on memory and story-telling. Other barriers to consistent and non-fragmented accounts may include the recruitment of culturally matched interpreters and claimants' use of derogatory language, which, nonetheless, mirrors the language available in some cultures to describe one's sexual minority status (Berg & Millbank, 2009).

Another feature of this population's experiences on the societal level is that of deprivation. In the UK, asylum-seeking people face constraints to work, alongside impoverished housing facilities (Bell & Hansen, 2009). Access to healthcare may be compromised by discrimination fears, cultural barriers, structural inequalities and racism (Pollock, Newbold, Lafrenière, & Edge, 2012). Arguably, LGBT asylum-seeking people have extremely low social capital, which may reinforce isolation, as any attempts to connect and integrate are thwarted by economic destitution.

On a statutory level, existing evidence suggests that legal systems and their representatives are prone to homophobic attitudes and jurisdiction biases (LaViolette, 2013; UKLGIG, 2018). Asylee people who had engaged in same-sex acts but failed to weave these into a plausible identity story, and people whose stories did not match their sexual behaviour were more likely to be disbelieved (Cox & Gallois, 1996). This arbitrary distinction between sexual identity and practice (see van Anders, 2015) rests upon the presupposition of an essentialist view of sexuality (Barker, 2019), and risks obscuring the complexity of LGBT asylum-seeking people's experiences, which are bound by differing cultural norms and practices and by the effects of concealment, trauma, and persecution (Berg & Millbank, 2009).

Adjudicators are also more likely to rely on Western stereotypes (Akin, 2019). Examples include seeking effeminate characteristics in gay men and discrediting people who have had diverse partners or people with children (Jansen & Spijkerboer, 2011). This conduces to 'reverse covering' (Yoshino, 2006), suggesting that people are forced to represent their sexual and gender identities in ways which preserve the immutability and linearity assumptions of Western thought (Dhoest, 2018), with potentially fatal repercussions for those who fail to embody normative constructions of gender, race, sexuality and class (Lewis, 2014; Shakhari, 2014).

The influence of Cass's (1984) linear sexual minority identity theory is evident here. This results in the othering of queer asylum-seeking people, who, having experienced the effects of heteronormativity, are also being faced with challenging homonormative discourses (Lewis, 2014).

It is important here to question the idea of queer death as only pertinent to countries of origin. Shakhsari (2014) highlights the numerous human rights abuses that transgender people face in re-settlement. Violence and discrimination in host countries is common amongst all queer refugee people (Alessi, Kahn, Greenfield, Woolner, Manning, 2018; Rigoni, 2016), and so are incidents of sexual abuse (Berg & Millbank, 2009); thus, rendering rights as highly temporal and, sadly, confined within geopolitical logistics (Shakhsari, 2014).

#### *2.4.1.4. Resettlement*

At post-resettlement, LGBT refugee people might bear feelings of emotional exhaustion, as the pressure to engage with the LGBT scene and its lifestyle to support one's credibility might leave some feeling disoriented and overexposed (Kahn & Alessi, 2017). Shame and fear may continue to be prevalent, as traumatic memories are triggered by new social situations, leading to increased rates of psychological distress and suicidality (Shidlo & Ahola, 2013). This is also a phase marked by the processing of the losses suffered along the journey (Papadopoulos, 2002). A model which might help situate this procedure is that of 'cultural bereavement' (Eisenbruch, 1990), which highlights the importance of the continuation of cultural and community practices to maintain a cohesive identity. Nevertheless, the model presupposes a positive relationship with one's community prior to exile, which may not be accurate for many LGBT refugee people.

Psychological distress may be exacerbated by the continued social exclusion and isolation. LGBT refugee people may be more reluctant to form supportive networks with people from their own or similar backgrounds due to the fear of persecution and may also be excluded by mainstream LGBT organisations as their (sexual) identities are constructed through homogenising, racialised lenses (Karimi, 2018). Luibhéid (2008) encourages considering exclusion practices as entrenched within neo-liberal contexts, which deem certain *bodies* as desirable (White, with consumerist power) in

the expense of others (BME, low-income). Therefore, the privileges of living in urban spaces are denied to BME LGBT refugee people (Bhagat, 2018), following the mutual workings of heterosexism, homonormativity, racism, and classism. These workings constitute barriers to accessing healthcare, education and employment (Munro et al., 2013), constraining access to resources that could facilitate integration (Karimi, 2018).

Refugee people's suffering is also replicated in the cultural and discursive spheres through means by which their right to authorship of their narratives is denied. Grewal (2005) discusses how 'refugeeness'<sup>2</sup> has come to illustrate the all-encompassing ways that the refugee identity is understood, which places refugee people in a certain disadvantaged power relationship with the 'liberators'. According to Murray's (2014) analysis, this narrative raises two ethical considerations. Firstly, it creates a false distinction between the 'civilised' West and the 'uncivilised' rest-of-the-world, which overlooks the risks and challenges that LGBT refugee people continue to face in post-resettlement. Secondly, this arbitrary distinction encourages the disownment of one's cultural heritage (Jenicek, Lee, & Wong, 2009), reminiscing colonialist discourses. Such discursive realities saddle refugee people with the 'burden of happiness' (Ahmed, 2010), translating into their trivialising experiences of abuse in Western territories not to be seen as 'ungrateful' and sabotage their asylum plea (Goodman, Burke, Liebling, & Zasada, 2014). The above can be further understood through the lens of 'homonationalism', whereby LGBT rights rhetoric becomes part of a homonormative nationalist and imperialist agenda, which warrants liberation from the savage 'other' (Puar, 2007); in this case refugee people's countries of origin.

#### *2.4.1.5. Historical context*

The multi-layered experience of forcibly displaced LGBT people is constituted by and reflects particular historical and chronological circumstances. Much of the anti-LGBT laws around the globe originate from British colonial rule, concerned with imposing Christian moral values onto the indigenous populations to guard against 'sodomy' (Gupta, 2008; Kretz, 2013). 'White' rules were legitimised on othering and the

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<sup>2</sup> Refers to refugee people's experience as it is lived and framed within given socio-politico-legal contextual realities (Malkki, 1995:506).

homogenisation and hyper-sexualisation of Black people (Thomas, 1996), whilst serving imperialist interests. Interestingly, these laws are now epitomising non-Western people's identity organisation against a backdrop of Western cultural invasion (Ekine, 2013).

## **2.5. Beyond Stories of Victimhood and Resilience**

Besides the importance of considering the predicaments that LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people face, a one-sided account of vulnerability risks further disempowering people by stripping them of their own resources, placing them in need of external support (Patel, 2003). This is often formulated within the confines of individual therapy, which can pathologise suffering, diverting our gaze from the human rights abuses, structural, and discursive inequalities, which explain that suffering in the first place (Patel, 2003; Smail, 2005; Summerfield, 2002, 1999). It also overshadows effects on the core tenets of communal organisation and support (Erikson, 1976); thus, depleting any opportunities to address what Kleinman, Das and Lock (1997) name as 'social suffering'.

Focussing on the mechanisms that people employ to overcome adversity, referred to elsewhere as 'resilience' (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013), may be an antidote to the victimising dominant trauma discourse. Resilience is seen as paramount in facilitating the rebuilding of lives post-exile (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). Nevertheless, no consensus exists vis-à-vis its definition. Some authors view resilience as an innate characteristic (Ahern, Ark, & Byers, 2008), being operationalised through the positive and proportionate adaptation against a backdrop of difficulty (Masten, 2001). Others highlight its dynamic nature, being crystallised within a nature-nurture transaction (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2007; Masten & Wright, 2010).

Some of the criticisms concerning the ways resilience is employed in psychological literature amount to the overreliance on and arbitrary use of the underlying concepts of adaptation and adversity. That is, that theories of resilience fail to acknowledge the context specificity and cultural sensitivity of what is defined (and by whom) as positive adaptation and what experiences are rendered adverse enough to justify psychological growth (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Theron, Theron, & Malindi, 2012). A

more comprehensive and culturally-sensitive definition views resilience as “both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways” (Ungar, 2008:225).

#### 2.5.1. Reviewing LGBT Refugee/Asylum-seeking People’s Resilience

Better understanding the pathways and resources that are available to forcibly displaced LGBT people is fundamental to support restorative processes and better service provision. Research in this area is scarce. To explore relevant scholarship, I conducted a scoping review following guidance provided by Peters and colleagues (2015). The question that guided my search was:

- *What can published literature tell us about issues of ‘resilience’, ‘resistance’ and ‘wellbeing’ in LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people?*

Six articles were included in the final review (Appendix B). To date, only one Canadian study has directly examined resilience indices, following interviews with 26 LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people from various ethnic backgrounds. Alessi (2016) understood resilience as being synthesised by both internal and external mechanisms, highlighting that hope, spirituality, and connecting with others, alongside accessing psychological, legal, and social aid, afforded opportunities for psychological healing, negotiating the complex asylum-seeking process, and restructuring one’s life in exile.

Obtaining professionals’ perspectives, Kahn, Alessi, Woolner, Kim, and Olivieri (2017) noted that the very process of forming safe and trustworthy connections with service providers could potentially boost wellbeing. These relationships might not only act as containing and affirmative networks – pictured elsewhere as an alternative form of kinship, substituting lost familial and societal relationships (Kahn, 2005) – but also as therapeutic bridges, offering people strategies to heal from trauma and navigate the (asylum) system (Kahn et al., 2017).

Whilst service engagement may prove useful in supporting marginalised people's integration and orientation to the demands of the asylum process, one cannot be oblivious to the power imbalance inherent in such relationships, which may perpetuate wellbeing disparities by inadvertently reproducing heteronormative, patriarchal, and/or homonationalist perspectives. Connections with service providers may also be undermined by professionals' feeling deskilled about working with the multiple intersections present in an LGBT forced migration context (Chávez, 2011), alongside cultural and language barriers, fear, shame and stigma amongst this population (Reading & Rubin, 2011). Therefore, considering LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people's resilience only by means of their engagement with services might be inadequate.

This begs the question of who might be best placed to support healing if forming alliances with statutory services might be challenging for some LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people. In exploring providers' and users' perspectives, Kahn, Alessi, Kim, Woolner, and Olivieri (2018) discussed the benefits of engaging with community organisations and groups. On a similar note, Logie, Lacombe-Duncan, Lee-Foon, Ryan, and Ramsay (2016) underlined the significance for African and Caribbean LGBT refugee people in Canada of being part of a social support group for: facilitating self-acceptance; positive identity formation and belonging; increasing access to community resources and public spaces; and reducing structural inequalities by offering support and advice regarding housing, employment, asylum, and healthcare.

It may be argued that existing literature has been concerned with an individualistic analysis of resilience and wellbeing. That is, that even when some form of community organisation or engagement is included in the equation, this is described in ways which stress its effects on an individual basis. This reinforces an essentialist understanding of resilience, being enabled and reinforced by external support that is of individual and/or relational nature. However, focussing on the individualistic and static characteristics of resilience may risk introducing pathologising distinctions between those that are seen as 'well-equipped' to deal with adversity and those that are not (Harper & Speed, 2014). It also fails to comment on the social capital and context-specific features of wellbeing, seen as a source of collective power and



healing (Harvey, 1996). In this sense, resilience should not be regarded as an individual trait, being enhanced by community support, but rather as an a priori feature of impromptu collective formations, constitutive of collective, as well as, individual empowerment.

Only two sources have reflected on the merits of collective resilience in this population. Fobear (2017) reported that through means of bottom-up collective organisation and action, a group of LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people in Canada were enabled to exercise their ability to challenge some of the adverse systemic and discursive realities that they face. Similarly, Taracena (2018) has stressed the benefits of queer refugee activism, being constitutive of collective strength and survival. By emphasising the participatory nature of resilience, this literature suggests a common thread between social justice and wellbeing. That is, that collective empowerment may uphold social justice action, which is in turn facilitative of psychological wellness (Holland, 1992; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

#### 2.5.2. Methodological Considerations

Notwithstanding conceptual limitations, the literature presented is fraught with methodological dilemmas worth highlighting. Taracena's (2018) report does not include any methodological details so it will not be included in this appraisal. All research presented above engaged with a qualitative inquiry. Three studies utilised semi-structured interviews to facilitate data collection (Alessi, 2016; Kahn et al., 2017, 2018). Although interviews may allow participants to express themselves in personally meaningful ways (Coyle & Wright, 1996), one cannot be oblivious to power imbalances between interviewers and interviewees. Such settings might inadvertently replicate asylum interview dynamics and, thus, enact similar anxiety-driven responses (Murray, 2014). Logie and colleagues (2016) used focus-groups, albeit these settings are equally not immune to the workings of power discrepancies. Fobear (2017) attempted to redress the issue by engaging in a participatory project, enabling participants to lead on its design and execution.

Thematic analysis was the predominant method of analysis used (Alessi, 2016; Kahn et al., 2018; Logie et al., 2016), with Kahn and colleagues (2017) using grounded theory. Fobear (2017) does not provide an account of how study conclusions were

reached. Notwithstanding the benefits in understanding the 'whats' and 'hows' of this population's needs, the appropriation of summative methods may obscure the nuances in individual and collective stories, whilst failing to attend to the multi-contextual basis of meaning.

This is important given the heterogeneity amongst studies regarding participant's demographics. Specifically, samples comprised people from LGBT and both refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds, with the analytic methods followed obstructing any between-group differential analysis; thus, precluding the consideration of the bearing of participants' intersectional selves on their perspectives, which may invite false homogeneity assumptions.

Most studies adopted purposive sampling procedures, which may reflect the difficulties accessing people with marginalised identities. Alessi (2016) and Kahn and colleagues (2017,2018), recruited people through relevant legal and community support services, the private sector, educational settings, community events, and through snowballing procedures; a studies' strength in potentially capturing a breadth of experiences. Logie and colleagues (2016) and Fobear (2017) sourced participants through LGBT refugee organisations. Nevertheless, findings may not be relevant to people, who have struggled to engage with services and/or community organisations, and people who might still experience the effects of covering. All sources reviewed have also been produced in a North American region and, as such, reflecting specific geo-politico-legal contexts, as well as migration routes, which may constitute different experiences to people who flee to Europe.

The above suggest that more research is needed to understand LGBT forced migrant people's wellbeing trajectories in a UK context, while appropriating methodologies that attend to their intersectional subjectivities. Narrative approaches might be suitable here and will be explored in the next chapter.

## **2.6. Towards Collective Resistance**

The preceding conceptual analysis of the literature points towards a performative and contextual understanding of resilience. That is, moving away from

conceptualisations that stress features residing within individuals and/or groups, towards a more context-specific and action-based understanding. This would necessitate a shift towards a more active terminology. The concept of ‘resistance’, which assumes a non-stigmatising way of harnessing people’s resources (Todd, Wade, & Renoux, 2004), may be of relevance. Wade defines resistance as “any attempt to imagine or establish a life based on respect and equality, on behalf of one’s self or others, including any effort to redress the harm caused by violence or other forms of oppression” (1997:25). The means available to people in resisting abuse are dependent on their respective contexts and might encompass overt (eg. activism, stopping violence), as well as covert actions (eg. hope, positive self-talk) (Wade, 1997). Honouring acts of resistance in therapeutic and research enterprises might support a powerful agentic narrative, enhancing people’s immunity against the psychologically dismantling effects of oppression (Wade, 1997), whilst affording new creative possibilities for change and wellbeing (Afuape, 2016). Yet, little has been written about the usefulness of the concept in complex humanitarian emergency settings.

#### 2.6.1. Liberation Psychology

The review of the literature points towards a collective understanding of resistance. Burstow (1992) theorises collective resistance within the prism of ‘critical consciousness’, albeit they object to the idea that this is a mandatory pre-requisite of any form of resistance. Critical consciousness, or ‘conscientização’, refers to the development of a critical awareness of one’s distress within the context of wider power hierarchies (Freire, 1972).

These ideas rest within the field of liberation psychology, which can provide a useful ethical framework when engaging with marginalised populations (Montero & Sonn, 2009). Psychology of liberation embraces the formulation of personal distress in reference to the socio-political processes that caused it (Moane, 2003). It also attends to the internalised psychological manifestations of oppression, stressing the need for transforming these, so that individuals and groups are enabled to engage in social action to bring about meaningful change (Moane 1999,2009). Thus, liberation psychology offers space for the integration of personal, relational, and distal factors of distress, and in linking the personal with the political it aspires to realise

sustainable macro-level change (Prilleltensky, 2003). By placing an emphasis on social justice, this framework ethically orients professionals to a working partnership with the communities they serve (Montero, 2007), enabling suitable structures for a critical consciousness to emerge (Balcazar, Garate-Serafini, & Keys, 2004).

### 2.6.2. Participatory Approach

In my quest to ethically situate myself alongside forcibly displaced LGBT people, I employed the collaborative Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, whereby traditional boundaries and power discrepancies between the researcher and participants are questioned (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). PAR offers possibilities for a new kind of emancipatory 'praxis'<sup>3</sup>, endorsing innovative methodologies to create knowledge that is produced with (and not for) the communities that it serves (Watkins & Schulman, 2008).

### 2.6.3. Collective Narrative Methodologies

Collective narrative approaches, born out of the tenets of narrative therapy, correspond well with liberation practice, providing a tangible way of translating PAR ethics into a research methodology (Mills, Castro Romero, & Ashman, 2018).

Narrative practice engages with the stories that people tell to make sense of themselves and their world (Morgan, 2000). Stories have transcultural applicability and are constitutive of beliefs and practices (Denborough, 2008; White & Epston, 1990). Narrative therapy concerns itself with supporting individuals to de-construct oppressing narratives and allow for alternatives to surface (Morgan, 2000). Afuape (2012,2016) suggests that any attempts to support people to author their own preferred stories forms an act of liberation.

Collective narrative practice espouses narrative therapy principles for the transformation of groups. In so doing, it attends to social suffering through dialogical processes that allow for the strengths of the collective to emerge and be reaffirmed (Denborough, 2012); thus, new possibilities for change are mobilised (Afuape, 2016). Those possibilities are rooted in the collective's knowledge, skills, and expertise, the

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<sup>3</sup> Indicates the combination of critical reflection with social action to confer sustainable change (Freire, 1972; Martín-Baró, 1994).

storying of which produces what Denborough refers to as ‘double-storied’ accounts, suggesting that the collective validation of both survival and suffering narratives can energise connections with wider transgenerational, historical, and cultural contexts (2018). Perhaps most importantly, collective narrative practice offers what Freire pictured as “unity in diversity” (1994:57), or else a sense of belonging, which – to borrow from Kleiman and colleagues’ (1997) analysis of suffering as incommunicable – through language, offers people some form of cultural representation of pain and of themselves, allowing for their predicaments to feel less isolating. Therefore, this approach might resonate well with LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people, who have been robbed of a vital sense of togetherness (Kahn, 2015). Some examples of collective narrative practice with marginalised groups include: ‘Tree of Life’ (Ncube, 2006); ‘Team of Life’ (Denborough, 2008); ‘Recipes for Life’ (Wood, 2012).

## **2.7. Summary, Gaps, and Aims**

I began writing this chapter by attempting a narrative review of the intersectional experiences of LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people through their journey from fleeing persecution to relocation, and across various contexts. It transpired that much of the published literature concerning this population is saturated with stories of trauma and victimisation, associated with human rights violations registered across countries of origin and ‘welcoming’ countries.

Although attesting to this population’s predicaments is of paramount importance for underscoring the need for a constructive response, focussing solely on victimisation accounts can be re-traumatising and offers little insight into how services can facilitate healing. To better understand factors that might be protective of this population’s wellbeing, I conducted a scoping review. International scholarship points towards understanding resilience as synonymous to community support; albeit resilience is often framed in singular, internal, and static ways. Research that explores the endorsing of a collective, performative, contextual, and resistance-based account of wellbeing is limited.

The opportunities of harnessing the power of collective resistance in transforming individual and collective distress belies the lack of awareness regarding its

operationalisation. As little is still known about how to support this population (Alessi & Kahn, 2017), understanding experiences of collective resistance could provide psychological services with a bottom-up framework for ethically reaching out and meeting sexual and gender minority forced migrant people's needs. The founded reluctance amongst this population to utilising mental health support, as discussed, deems such insights exigent. To my knowledge, no UK literature has investigated these issues yet.

Facilitating collective resistance spaces might reflect a public health approach to wellbeing, resting upon the assumption that collective tenets of support might provide sufficient scaffolding for LGBT forced migrant people's transforming of their lives. The integration of liberation psychology, collective narrative, and PAR approaches might be a helpful compass in this quest, as it offers possibilities for self-organisation, empowerment and the reclaiming of people's preferred identities. This proves a necessity given the dearth of alternative narratives about this population, who often become objectified under hegemonic representations of refugeeness, sexuality, gender, and race.

As it has already been mentioned, BME subgroups might experience additional impediments to authoring their stories and accessing collective spaces in metropolitan contexts (Bhagat, 2018). Therefore, this study will specifically focus on BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people, who reside in London, under the assumption that their intersectional identities would have uniquely impacted on adopted ways of resistance.

In light of the gaps presented above and following conversations with members of the LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking community in London as a collective, the details of which will be presented in the 'Methodology' chapter, the following aims and research questions were arrived at:

The overarching aim of the research is:

- To co-construct an ethical and safe platform, which can enable services to meaningfully engage with BME (and non-BME) LGBT refugee and asylum-

seeking people as a collective, in a quest to meet their needs and transform psychological distress.

The two core objectives of the research are:

- To explore BME LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people's experiences of collective resistance within the context of their journey into exile and beyond.
- To understand the merits of collective resistance in enabling healing and growth following past and ongoing experiences of oppression and abuse amongst this population.

The two research questions are:

- How do BME LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people personally and collectively resist oppression and how important are these stories in facilitating healing?
- What stories does this population tell about their multiple identities and how do these impact on the ways they resist oppression?

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Epistemology**

In conducting this research, I am embracing the stance that the stories that BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people tell are co-shaped between individuals and the cultural, societal and political forces with which they interact (Gergen, 1999). This stance would suit the overarching purpose of my research, of understanding stories of resistance beyond individualistic and teleological considerations, as inextricably linked to the assumptions, discourses, opportunities, and limitations that exist in the socio-politico-cultural spheres (Foucault, 1980; Smail, 2005). Therefore, the present study is situated within a social constructionist framework.

Social constructionism purports that our understanding of ourselves and the world is a dynamic process, firmly situated within a dialogical transaction between relational, social, historical, cultural, political, economic and distal systems (Burr, 2015). As such, there is not one universal truth to be discovered, rather what is taken for granted is shaped by the assumptions, conventions, nuances and agreements that this dialogical process gives rise to (Parker, 1999). Therefore, individual sense-making is inextricably linked to the collective, galvanising hierarchical contexts of meaning (Pearce, 2007). The currency that supports the transaction between systems is often language, which is inherently performative in that it not only constitutes the realities within which people and systems operate but is also shaped by them (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

A social constructionist epistemology affords an exploration of the multiple contexts that BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people draw on to make sense of their experiences and identities. It might highlight the ways that BME LGBT forcibly displaced people's narratives are influenced by and understood within ever-changing times and places (e.g. many phases of the exile journey), and in constant interaction with particular actors (e.g. families, states, partners, professionals). This permits an understanding of the performative and contextual aspects of collective resistance.



Furthermore, engaging with a theory of knowledge that allows for a contextual analysis of identities might be helpful in exploring the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and refugeeeness, particularly as they are inscribed within multiple systems of oppression. In summary, a socio-politico-cultural analysis of the stories as narrated in given temporal spaces affords a consideration of: what is narrated, by whom, and how; what is privileged by the narration and what not; who the audiences are, how audiences make sense of what is told and why; what the relevant contexts are, how contexts impact on how meanings are arrived at; and the power dynamics that dictate the production of such meanings.

### **3.2. Participatory Action Research**

Epistemological and methodological considerations were imbedded within a PAR ethos, the specifics of which are outlined in subsequent sections in this chapter. Kidd and Kral (2005) do not see PAR as a complete methodology, but rather as a set of principles which are constitutive of knowledge and action that are valuable to the community of interest. By involving communities in the design, analysis, and synthesis of research, PAR challenges the assumption of neutrality – arguably all research is value-laden (Harper, Gannon, & Robinson, 2013) – thus, in its alignment with a Foucauldian perspective on knowledge and power (Foucault, 1980), it questions who is deemed worthy of creating knowledge. Nevertheless, thesis-related assessment constraints meant that I had to retain control of the analytic process.

### **3.3. Collective Narrative Methodology**

This project was based on collective narrative practice as it affords an analysis of the collective stories of predicament and resistance, whilst grounding these onto the multiple individual subjectivities (Denborough, 2012). In shaping the methodology followed, I drew guidance from collective narrative practice's 'Ten Themes and Dreams' (Denborough, 2008). In so doing, I maintain that individuals and communities always respond to trauma by means of their own skills, knowledge, and local resistances, reflected in cultures and histories (Denborough, Freedman, & White, 2008); the storying of which can gear connections with people's own values

and other affected communities, in a plea for supporting belonging, personal and collective empowerment, as well as social action (Denborough, 2006,2008).

### 3.4. Procedure

#### 3.4.1. Recruitment and Participants

Purposeful sampling procedures were pursued. Specifically, I sought links with a London-based charity supporting LGBT forced migrant people of African and Asian origin. Suitable participants had to identify as BME (African or Asian), LGBT, and have refugee or asylee status, due to persecution based on their LGBT identities. Lack of funding for the recruitment of interpreters constrained recruitment only to people confident in expressing themselves in English. Exclusion criteria comprised: non-identifying with any of the above categories; being underage; and having been denied asylum. Five people participated in the study (Table 1.). Names are pseudonyms. Unfortunately, I was not able to recruit bisexual and transgender people, so hereafter discussions refer only to lesbian and gay cisgender people. This limitation is further explored in the discussion chapter.

<b>Chosen Pseudonym</b>	<b>Home Region</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Sexuality</b>	<b>Gender Identity</b>
<b>Kelvin</b>	Africa	Refugee	Gay	Male(cisgender)
<b>Stella</b>	Africa	Asylum-seeking	Lesbian	Female(cisgender)
<b>Dom</b>	Asia	Asylum-seeking	Gay	Male(cisgender)
<b>Kaba</b>	Africa	Asylum-seeking	Lesbian	Female(cisgender)
<b>Bobby</b>	Asia	Asylum-seeking	Lesbian	Female(cisgender)

**Table 1. Participant Demographics**

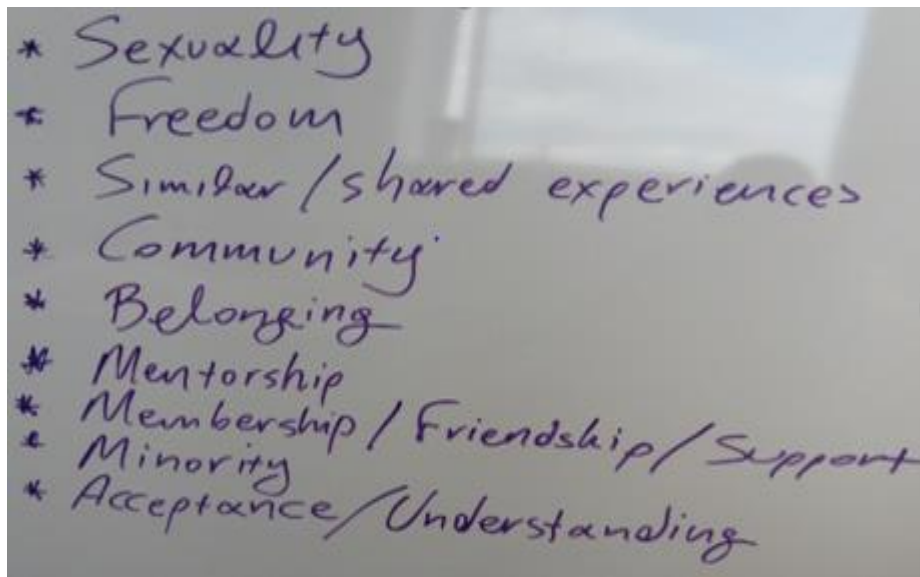
Recruitment was heavily supported by the coordinator of the charity, who acted as a 'gatekeeper' advertising the study and locating suitable participants. It was thought that by involving a trusted person, participants may have felt less threatened and coerced to participate. This was also in keeping with BPS (2018b) guidance on working with community organisations, which emphasises harnessing local expertise, so that any involvement or intervention feels organic. To facilitate an environment of trusted partnership, I joined the charity's monthly gatherings as an attendee. There, I bore witness to the community's struggles, strengths, values, which was humbling and enriching, supporting my positioning as a facilitator of a small process (research) embedded within a larger cause: challenging the multiple systems of oppression.

### 3.4.2. Data Collection

#### *3.4.2.1. Phase 1: Engagement and metaphor development*

Data was collected between July and December (2019). The initial stage entailed concerted efforts to building trusting working alliances with participants. This was underpinned by minding the particularities of working with this population, such as the power imbalance, the risk for re-traumatisation, and mistrust and apprehension in sharing their stories (Higgins, & Butler, 2012). To assist with cultivating a climate of safety, all meetings were orchestrated in the familiar spaces where charity members hold their gatherings.

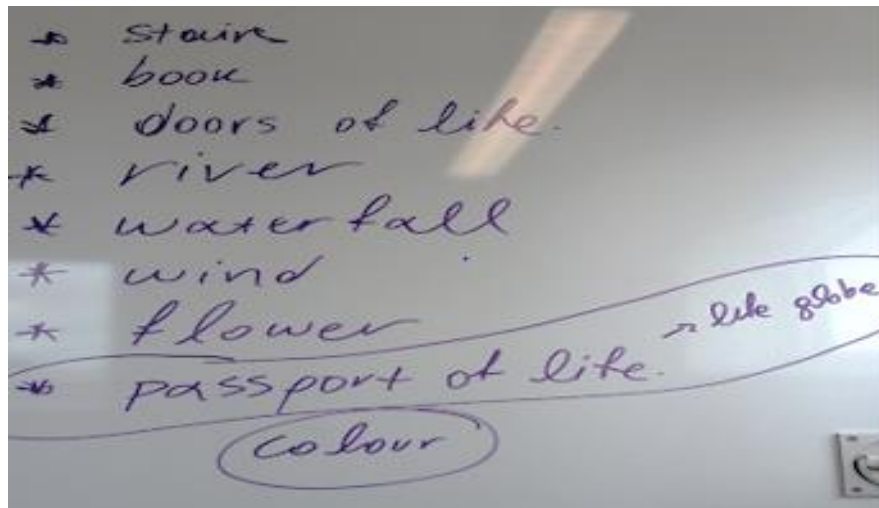
As part of the participatory focus of the project, participants were invited to engage in two pre-research collective discussion meetings. These were framed around dialogical ways of interacting and aimed at giving each person the chance to express their views on how storytelling-based research can best meet their community's needs, what their understanding of the values of the organisation is, what holds the community together, and how these can be reflected in the project. Figure one depicts a summary of the main values derived from those conversations.



**Figure 1. Community Values**

Our initial meetings supported the co-discovery of the value of collective narrative approaches in documenting, extending, and enriching the stories of marginalised people. In doing so, I presented participants with the idea of creating a metaphor that would resonate with their (hi)stories, wishes, and dreams. Locally-situated culturally-appropriate metaphors are often mobilised in contexts of hardship as vehicles offering possibilities for extending the narratives to support the reclaiming of people's lives from the effects of oppression (Denborough, 2008,2018).

Conversations were held, whereby participants were encouraged to trace the use of metaphors in their histories and traditions (Figure 2). We also practiced a brief collective story-telling based on Ncube's (2006) 'Tree of Life' metaphor to enable participants to access this proposed way of storying the 'self'. To capture the shared values of belonging, identity, and freedom, as presented above, we unanimously arrived at the use of a novel metaphor, which transcended the particularities of specific cultural backgrounds, and stressed the commonalities in the journeys, dreams, and wishes of the community: 'The Passport of Life'.



**Figure 2. Culturally-Relevant Metaphors' Examples**

Passports constitute as much of a physical object as a construct signifying legal passage, having historically supported safe border crossings. As much as they provide people with access to international territory, they can also be restrictive of it, as their power reflects any given socio-political zeitgeist. Passports can be illustrative of a person's identity, history, ancestry and, as such, create a temporal, geographical, and relational sense of existing. Identity descriptors, as depicted in passports, are usually assigned at birth by third parties and, therefore, can be constricting or distorted, out-casting parts of selfhood that are not accepted by any majority. The 'Passport' (or any document granting access or leave to remain) is not just a dream, a wish, a right for BME queer refugee and asylum-seeking people, but also a chance to reclaim selfhood, in a political act that is constitutive of new possibilities of living.

#### *3.4.2.2. Phase 2: Individual story-telling*

The second phase concerned the co-structuring of two workshops, whereby story-telling was organised around the 'Passport' metaphor. The development of 'Passports' was largely circumscribed around nine main points (Figure 3). These represented areas that participants felt important to include, topics reminiscent of the charity's ethos, as well as areas that collective narrative literature acknowledges as tools for narrating subordinate stories (Denborough, 2008,2018).

<b>Home</b> What/where is home?	<b>Skills/Knowledge</b> What are you good at?
<b>Diversity/Values/Sexuality/Gender</b> What makes you, you?	<b>Allies</b> Who is standing by you?
<b>Roots/Heritage/Culture</b> Where do you come from? What have you learnt that is important for you?	<b>Border Control: Challenges</b> What were the challenges you faced before/during/after crossing?
<b>Role Models</b> People that influenced you.	<b>Goals/Dreams/Hopes</b> What are your goals, hopes, dreams?
	<b>Gifts You Bring</b> What do you want to give back?

Figure 3. 'Passport of Life'

Participants were encouraged to present their 'Passports' in a collective setting, inviting others to bear witness to the stories, and subsequently comment on what aspects of the 'self', as performed and witnessed, constituted strengths, skills, knowledges. This process aimed at thickening narratives of growth and enhancing connections (White, 2007). Spontaneous narration was encouraged with the intention not to replicate interviewing contexts. Aside from potentially enacting the power imbalances and the silencing that takes place in asylum interviews (Murray, 2014), Hyden (2008), suggests that the use of question-answer interviewing risks being experienced as intrusive, thwarting people's agency in interpreting their own narration. Moreover, in an act of 'unlocking possibilities' I drew guidance from Wade (1997) and Denborough (2008) when shaping prompting questions, to enable present and past connections to resurface (eg. *who might not be surprised to hear this about you?*; *who else in your family/community/culture thinks about this the same way?*) and to unravel a more strength-based account of a storied 'self' that resist-s-ed (e.g. *what did you do that helped to survive this?*).

Stationery were provided to assist with a varied representation of the stories. To minimise emphasis on verbal representation and to overcome potential language and cultural barriers, participants were encouraged to bring photos or any other stimuli they felt conveyed the meaning that they wished to construct. Dom used drawings to enhance story-telling, and Kelvin, Kaba, and Stella preferred the use of written and/or verbal narration.

Four participants engaged with the individual story-telling (Bobby did not participate on personal grounds, albeit she attended the collective story-telling workshop). Stella could not attend any of the workshops due to travel issues, so the sharing of her 'Passport' happened on a one-to-one setting. The average narration lasted for approximately 50 minutes and reflected each narrator's style, experiences, capacity, and context.

#### *3.4.2.3. Phase 3: Collective story-telling*

The second act was very much focussed on extending resistance narratives by introducing the element of collective responses to injustices. Participants (all but Stella) were invited to join a third workshop, which lasted 75 minutes, and to converse as a collective of humans, striving to flow through cultures and geopolitical spaces. Participants reflected on shared challenges, the strengths, and resources that come with collective organisation and how to bring about change. Discussions were marked by contemplation of what desirable change might look like, how it can be supported, and by whom. This was embedded within the wider aim of extending connections, exploring possibilities for forming new alliances.

The emphasis here was on empowering participants as a collective to enable visualising the potential of and generating ideas for realising change. To facilitate such a space, I occupied the position of a 'curious explorer' using prompting questions aiming at narrating resistances, breakthroughs, kinships, dreams, visions, and plans for change. This was also a conscious attempt to counter stories of vulnerability by allowing space for stories of possibility and reclaiming to emerge (Afuape, 2016; Hyden, 2008).

### 3.5. Analysis

Narratives hold central position in this research and, as such, narrative analysis (NA) is employed to process the findings. NA can attend to issues of power, unveiling different layers of meaning (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008); thus, supporting a weaving between individual and collective understandings of resistance, whilst attending to broader issues of oppression.

For the purposes of this research, data comprised participants' narratives as audio-recorded during the two acts of story-telling (individual/collective) and subsequently transcribed verbatim and presented in written word. Conventions outlined by Poland (1995) were followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the transcription process, which offered an initial platform to interpretatively engage with the material. In this text, narratives comprised stories "selected, organised, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" (Riessman, 2008:3).

NA offers multiple ways to engage with story-telling. Hence, no blueprint is available, which can also offer possibilities for creative processes to emerge. My approach to addressing the research questions was grounded upon integrating two main axes. Firstly, attention was warranted to the *performance* and *performativity* of narratives (Squire et al., 2014). I operated within literature suggesting that narrators use stories as a means to perform parts of their identity (Goffman, 1981), whilst the very act of performance underlies the making of such identities (Butler, 2006). In the context of this project, I was interested in what aspects of themselves participants share through their stories and how their stories are constitutive of their identities. I was also curious about how stories of resistances are performed and how dialogical transactions can crystallise and enrich the very act of resisting; thus, mirroring conclusions made earlier regarding prioritising the 'doing' over the 'being' elements of resistance.

It is assumed that one's identities are storied in contexts, each ascribing opportunities and challenges in relation to what is tellable and what not, resulting in many possible subjectivities allowed to be expressed (Depperman, 2015; Zimmerman, 1998). Reflecting on the multiple subjectivities would necessitate



considering the multiplicity of the voices present (and non-present) in participants' speech, which Bakhtin (1984) refers to as 'polyphony'. Polyphony can be internal or external and is context-mediated. Reflecting on the multiplicity of voices within and across BME LGBT forcibly displaced people's narratives, is essential so as to richly represent the intersections of their multiple selves across multiple contexts. This analysis might be particularly helpful in naming stories of resistance, alongside stories of suffering, whilst attending simultaneously to both individual and collective contexts (Denborough, 2008).

Therefore, the second analytic axis concerns the examination of the *contextual* positions that participants occupy, alongside the varied perspectives that get to surface. In this quest, I am embracing a reflexive lens, through which to understand how contexts shape story-telling and the identities performed. Inevitably, this would involve exploring the workings of the interspace between narrators and audiences, both present (researcher) and absent (Home Office, public, family, significant others and more), as the contexts within which story-telling is inscribed. Those contexts may privilege certain stories over others, referred to elsewhere as dominant versus counter-narratives, which are reflective of positions of more and less power respectively (Andrews, 2002). Given the oppressive situations that participants here must navigate and the resulting limited opportunities concerning the authoring of their stories, a reflexive exploration of the ways that their stories are formed against the backdrop of often adverse dominant discursive realities can be helpful, especially in the quest of investigating experiences of resistance.

To enhance the validity of the claims made, I will be presenting distinct segments of participants' narratives. Aiming to stay true to the rich, idiosyncratic descriptions appropriated, which might be reflective of culturally-specific ways of ascribing meaning, I have refrained from editing their language to suit English grammar and syntax conventions. I will also link different segments together, so as not to provide coherence or author the stories, but to illustrate more vividly the statements made. To assist with analytic transparency, I offer an extract of my research reflexive journal (Appendix, C).

### 3.6. Ethics

Ethical clearance was obtained by the University of East London (UEL) School of Psychology Ethics Committee (Appendix, D). An information letter was shared with participants through the charity's coordinator (Appendix, E) and subsequently revisited at the first pre-research meeting, to ensure confidence to consent to taking part (see Appendix, F for consent form). Participants were adequately informed about the purposes of the study, their responsibilities and rights, including the right to withdraw, stop at any point during data collection, and/or take comfort breaks. Assurances were provided regarding confidentiality, especially due to the sensitive context of asylum-seeking and the potential threat to life following deportation. To this end, I have omitted all personal identifiable information, including facts about participants' homelands, using generic continental descriptions instead. Fully informed consent was obtained from all participants. None requested to withdraw their data following completion. Stella did not consent to taking part in analysis discussions due to logistical issues. Participants were de-briefed following data collection and were provided with information regarding relevant support services (Appendix, G).

A management plan was reviewed by UEL to safeguard ethical handling of the data (Appendix, H). All anonymised transcripts have been stored on UEL OneDrive, separately from the encrypted audio data, stored on my UEL H:drive. Audio recordings will be destroyed following successful examination of the thesis. Anonymised transcripts will be kept for a three-year period (standard practice) following submission to aid for future publications.

Exploring the untold stories of BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people may constitute a sensitive topic, potentially being experienced as intrusive, exposing and traumatic (Renzetti & Lee, 1993). However, it is in the collective telling of stories that safe articulation of richer narratives is permitted to foreground strength and wellbeing (Denborough, 2008). Being influenced by Hyden's (2008) conceptualisation of safety in relational terms, I extensively thought about my engaging with participants and its being framed in empowering rather than constraining ways. Operating from a position of 'do no harm' (Patel, 2019), I embraced the stance of the researcher as a

listener (Hyden, 2008), not dictating the disclosure of information, but rather sharing the power by creating contexts of partnership and meaningful involvement.

At this point, it is important to also consider the risks pertaining to the wellbeing of the whole BME LGBT refugee/asylee community. Gready (2008) talks about the dangers inherent in the mis-interpretation of people's stories in the public sphere. Although one could argue that completely extinguishing such risk is unrealistic, the community and I co-created a collective space, whereby participants were supported to author their stories in a way that is meaningful to them and, therefore, less susceptible to mis-interpretations. It is hoped that offering people the space to share their perspectives, will also help the community by enriching the discourses around their experiences in more genuine and culturally relevant ways.

## 4. FINDINGS

In presenting the findings, I will first focus on individual narratives to permit a consideration of the nuances and ambiguities expressed and enacted through participants' 'small stories' (Phoenix, 2008). The emphasis here is on how each narrator constructs different aspects of their story thus, different aspects of selfhood discursively in context (Bamberg, 2006). This will be followed by analysis of the collective story-telling, closely mirroring the sequence of the two main elements of the metaphor used (individual 'Passport'/collective human flow, [see Appendix I for a 'Passport of Life' example]).

### 4.1. Individual Stories

#### 4.1.1. Kelvin:[170-171]"Always Remember Where You Come From, So You Know Where You're Going"

Kelvin used words and a piece of paper to build his version of 'Passport of Life'. Through narration, he performs a synthesis of a rich African cultural heritage with being a gay man. What struck me in Kelvin's narration is the ever-present movement, an interminable sense of becoming, evidenced by his ongoing journey, struggles, and achievements.

##### *4.1.1.1. A story about belonging*

Kelvin's story begins with a values-based performance of 'home':

[1-11]For me personally, home is a place, where I can live freely and express myself with no fear.[...] Like, anywhere in the world, but somewhere where I can express myself with no prejudice, no racism.[...] A quite place next to the beach [...](laughs). That's my fantasy.

[...]I can say that home now is the UK, because I tend to express myself.

[....][323-324] The inspiration for crossing the border was like having a better life, you know. Life with no prejudice, a safe home.

Kelvin performs his sense of belonging through temporal means. Home is shifting, transcending the physical boundaries of a given place, becoming synonymous to safety, equality, and freedom of expression. Through his speech, Kelvin constitutes the UK as a safe place, in that he establishes a sense of not needing to cover. This might make sense in the context of having been granted refugee status, and thus, being no longer persecuted. It also reflects a dominant discourse that the UK is safe for LGBT people and is conducive to people's expressing their multiple identities without censoring.

Kelvin's construction of the UK as safe legitimises the crossing, providing the inspiration for sustaining a better future. Nevertheless, he goes on to express conflictual views, highlighting the dangers that LGBT people continue to face, which shades the monolithic understanding of the UK as safe:

[220-225][...] because there is still, even this day of age in the UK, where being gay is legal and everything, there is still a lot of homophobia[...] and people are still afraid of it.[...]That's why we still hear news of people that are beaten up[...].

Kelvin makes a distinction between the legal context, which provides assurances to LGBT people in the UK and the social context, which can be threatening and marginalising. Kelvin constructs 'fear' as the context within which violence against LGBT people takes place and in so doing, he subtly draws parallels between the different workings of prejudice: prejudice feeds the fear of homosexuality and fear is a response to prejudice. In the previous extract, he also names racism as an additional interjecting context that feeds prejudice. In this context, Kelvin's "fantasy" of a quiet place by the sea, forms an act of resistance against the suppression of one's dreaming. It is also an irony, highlighting the context of destitution that refugee people are 'welcomed' into when crossing borders.

#### 4.1.1.2. *The 'buried self'*

Through narration, Kelvin brings a false 'self' into life. This 'self' is unseen, unheard, unnoticed, bound by a web of cultural, state, familial, religious, and social contexts, which determine what is legal, accepted, normal:

[14-55][...] I had to suppress myself, [...] because of the fear of being prosecuted or persecuted or being judged and being outcasted [...]. Where I come from being a gay person is taken as a taboo, as an abomination [...], because of the culture, the traditions and the very big influence of the church as well. [...] They don't see it and they are afraid of the unknown and they are afraid to accept it. [...] Basically, what I had to do was to pretend that I get along. This is gonna sound bad, like pretend that I'm 'normal'. [...] It was quite bad, and difficult, and depressing. [...] You cannot express it, [...] you cannot tell even a friend because of the fear of the unknown and what you have witnessed as well. These kinds of stories that people tell, [...] what the preacher preaches, what the government says about it. Somehow you are just isolated in yourself. [...] And sometimes it's very bad because when you're surrounded by everybody who thinks that being gay is bad, you start changing, [...] you start hating yourself, and you are suppressing that emotion of being gay. [...] you tend sometimes to think "Yeah, they might be right" [...].

In Kelvin's speech, one can notice two inner voices that shape two different subjectivities. One is the 'self' that surrenders to the suppression and oppression by external actors (family, church, state, society). This 'self' becomes self-hating under the burden of the dominant story that constructs LGBT – objectified here – as 'evil'. The other structures a 'self' that pretends to fit in the single-storied perspective of normality for survival purposes (self-burial). Interestingly, Kelvin adopts a 'meta-position' in his narration, where the 'I' becomes 'you', suggesting a collective active response amongst LGBT people, in order to protect themselves and resist the erosion of their sexuality by oppressive contexts. Suffering here is fashioned by means of isolation and fear. Kelvin speaks of the fear of the unknown to make sense of others' demonisation of sexuality in his native context and, in doing so, he draws parallels with his own emotional experience (fear of the unknown if exposed).

Fear weaves a common thread between Kelvin's experience in Africa and the UK. Within a backdrop of a seeming openness (dominant narrative), the invisibility of the 'self' continues to be constructed as a shield against the fear of abuse. Kelvin performs fear as an inseparable part of oneself. Further, in the UK, the burial of the

'self' happens through structural means. Kelvin shapes a context of services that is inflexible, inhumane, creating unwanted subjectivities:

[285-297][...]You have been concealing yourself for years, like for all your life, and coming here, to open up was a very big challenge.[...] You might think that you will be deported, so you tend to go quiet. Because that fear has been ingrained in you.[...] Another challenge is integrating, trying to fit in to the community. Because you are a man of colour,[...].[...] cause when it comes to integration and fitting in to the society, in terms of like you know, medical stuff, education, work.[...] You come here and then you are told you should provide proof of where you used to live [...], and you're like "I've not been living here,[...], I don't have that".[...] So, you end up being stuck,[...].

Kelvin draws on his racial background to understand difficulties with integrating. Exclusion and 'stuckness' are constructed as derivatives of social and structural contexts privileging White western norms and practices. He also reflects on the dominant discursive construction of what means to be a Black man to highlight the violence inherent in what he frames as "culture of disbelief"[334]:

[328-338] And then you are African and gay and then you realise that you are lost. There is that mentality, even here in the society, like "how can you be African, and be gay?"[...] They [Home Office] need proof of you being gay, [...], and they need you to act in a particular way, in the way they have in mind;[...] Because they don't tend to believe,[...], if you're Black.

One's intersectional identity is not afforded space to exist in the UK. The dominant understanding of the African man constrains all possibilities for digression, suggesting that Kelvin's authorship of his multiple subjectivities is in itself an act of resisting. A picture is also painted whereby these dominant understandings are commonly used (again the 'I' becomes 'You' denoting universality) to deny people's right for asylum; painted here as a deeply racist context.

#### 4.1.1.3. A story about 'being' and 'becoming'

Kelvin appropriates two intertwined reflexive positions. One concerns his storying of selfhood through multiple intersecting identities and the other is defined by witnessing how these are evolving, being transformed in both time and space:

[85-109]I am a Black African gay person. I think that makes me special and unique in some ways. And right now, I feel more special because I feel free. [...]TCP<sup>4</sup>: And what does being a Black African gay person mean to you? It means being a strong person. Because, according to the history, being Black comes with its own challenges. Being gay also comes with its own challenges. So, I'm both Black and gay. And on top of that I am also African and coming from Africa comes with its own prejudices. So, I'm all three of those things and I'm still living...[...] The first time I noticed this was when I started my journey for freedom.[...] And through that journey I've been overcoming them [challenges] slowly by slowly.[...] I think my friends, my mentors, my advisors. Also, where I come from, they think I'm strong, because [...] I survived.

Kelvin performs his intersectional identities as inseparable. His existence as a Black African gay man is experienced as carrying a degree of 'specialness', the reading of which is context-mediated. In the UK, feeling special relates to the privilege of expressing his self fully and freely, reflecting dominant dichotomies regarding freedom in the West and oppression in Africa. This may also be understood by his having been granted protection by a western state. Nevertheless, this specialness is simultaneously constructed as threatening ([91-92]"I'm all three of those things and I'm still living").

There are two salient narratives in Kelvin's construction of identity; one entertains the idea of 'normality', whilst the other speaks to strength. Kelvin's strength story is grounded within the intersection of the collective historical struggles of Black, African, and LGBT communities. Two levels are discernible: individual (Kelvin is strong) and collective (the communities have survived). This connection with the

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historical, collective contexts, affords Kelvin the opportunity to perform and shape his resistance, the cementing of which happens through witnessing by other parties (mentor, friends, family). There is also a pragmatic context worth noting. Kelvin's strength becomes more noticeable through his journey, as he overcomes physical, geographical and structural barriers.

Kelvin's understanding of strength mirrors his narrativisation of 'normality' as context-dependent:

[144-148] Apart from being attracted to the same sex, [...] I think that I am normal as everybody. [...] Now, I understand it as being a normal person. You are just in love with the same sex.

Kelvin's current cultural and geo-politico-social circumstances afford an experience of his sexuality as 'normal'; thus, shaping a sexual 'self' that is in constant metamorphosis in context. Nevertheless, there are evident contradictions in Kelvin's speech ([144] "Apart from"), which might be understood within heteronormativity, constructing queer sexuality as deviant.

Moreover, in storying accounts of 'being' and 'becoming' Kelvin constitutes a 'self' that acts, responds, moves, and values:

[114-137] I value equality regardless of gender, sexuality, race. [...] fair rule, just being just all over. [...] I never lived in an equal and just society. [...] I was subjected to being judged. But, I don't want to judge that subject. [...] And that's why I can say that it means 'greatness'. [...] It's not about like somebody did bad to me and I will do bad to them. It shows how somebody can be strong.

Kelvin constructs a 'self', whose values are embedded in his experiences of othering. Through his story, he exerts agency in choosing to occupy a different subjectivity to the one he has witnessed in the context of the societies he has lived in (his narrative breaks through geographical barriers here). In doing so, a new code of ethics is exercised that allows for new relational configurations. The use of the word

'greatness' is interesting here, as it connects to strength and points to both rising above and to enjoying a euphoric state. Thus, Kelvin transforms his 'abnormal', 'suppressed', 'unwanted' subject (how his intersectional 'self' is constructed in both African and UK contexts) to a great one.

The transformed subjectivities are not cut off from their roots but integrated with Kelvin's cultural heritage, honoured in his narrative. Kelvin performs a 'self' who is hard-working, respectful and humble, shaped by transgenerational cultural practices and contexts. This weaves a common thread between his familial and cultural contexts and his crossing to the UK.

[165-184]I cherish the aspect of being hard-working in my culture. Because they have this thing like "you will always have to work, no matter how hard things are".[...] Yeah, hard-working, respect [your elders], and [...] there is a say in my culture "always remember where you come from so that you can know where you're going".[...] Being a proud African man.[...] You cannot change your roots, so the only option is to accept it and be proud of it and keep on moving forward.

Kelvin constructs a sense of pride through his narration. His pride may be fathomed out in the context of the devaluation of Black identities in western culture, mandating a reassertion of Kelvin's Black pride, rooted within his racial and ethnic/cultural contexts. Through his speech, Kelvin reaffirms his identity as a proud African man against a backdrop of diverse audiences (explicit/implicit) and in the contexts of colonialism and racism. I, as a White man, directly interacting with Kelvin's story wonder whether his pride narrative was an attempt to re-define existing power imbalances in our relationship, also reinstating his strength and self-worth against oppressive discursive and structural realities instigated or permitted by implicit audiences (Home Office, Media).

#### *4.1.1.4. A story about overcoming*

Through his speech, Kelvin adopts an active positioning as a person who resists, fights, connects and dreams. He talks about keeping hope alive as a means to moving with it forwards. Kelvin's narration shapes a teenage mind, which was

resisting being conquered (losing hope), actively dreaming about an adult 'self' with increased power and resources. Here, (projected adult context) hope is constructed in materialistic means (providing for oneself):

[45-75]You go on the internet and you see people who have fought for it and then you see the activists. And it's still rough and it's still bad but you just have in mind that one day [...] things will change.[...] But it was a kind of 'little hope'. And you move with it, taking a day by a day.[...] At that time I was a teenager and I knew that one day I'll grow up and will fight for myself [...],I have a picture of me dreaming that "you will conquer it, when you get yourself to a position where you can financially support yourself".

Kelvin's hope is framed in relational terms. In his story he makes connections between his circumstances as a young person growing up in, what he has previously referred to as, an unjust context, and the activist movements that happen across the globe. Such connections bear hope and resistance and construct change as possible. The role of the internet, as another context, is relevant here. It heralds new virtual ways of connecting, which would have been prohibited in given physical spaces, but which should be interpreted in light of western globalism and cultural imperialism.

Relational subjectivities get privileged in Kelvin's account of overcoming challenges in the UK too. Kelvin constructs structural and integration challenges as insurmountable without the backing of a community. Community support is constituted as the ultimate context where courage, resistance, and confidence are constructed. 'Coming out' is also shaped as a relational process. This might echo the privileging of more collective ways of being within an African context, but also the oppressive and at times abusive nature of the asylum-seeking process, which ultimately dictates such forms of togetherness:

[300-318][community] vouch for you,[...] they walk you through the system, and they help you to integrate.[...] they gave me the courage to open up and say who I am and how the situation is.[...] Because in my mind I was like "I'm in the worst situation ever, I cannot be here, I cannot go back". But, listening

to them, having people facing the same challenges as you, talking to you and encouraging you [...], that was a good thing.

In the above, Kelvin creates a new form of family, which 'has his back', scaffolding the performance of an accepted and cherished 'self'. This context gives him permission to exist and to dream "Maybe, to find love in the future (laughs)"[372].

#### 4.1.2. Stella:[63]"Despite The Challenges That I'm Facing, I Can Still Smile"

Stella used verbal narration as a sole means for sharing her 'Passport of Life'. She introduces herself as a woman "from Africa, I have four kids, and I'm a lesbian"[95]. Amongst others, Stella's story serves to create coherence between different aspects of her identity, challenging established 'truths' about the incompatibility of some of the above categories.

##### *4.1.2.1. A story about concealing and exposure*

Like Kelvin, Stella performs a concealed 'self', bound by fear. Fear is constituted as a silencing force operating in societal, state, and discursive levels and experienced on individual (Stella) and collective (LGBT people) bases. For Stella, silencing creates differences between those who can freely express themselves and those whose subjectivities are constrained by threat and oppression. Her quiet response "you know inside what you are"[104], can be understood alongside the dominant narrative, branding her sexuality as "devilish"[103] and, as such, is constitutive of an assertive positioning, a form of 'self' re-definition. Her positioning invites a polyphonic understanding of her experience, with Stella adopting emotional descriptors to shape multiple subjectivities: confused, bad, afraid, bothered:

[18-20]All the time you have FEAR, because you cannot talk about it.[...]  
Because once you speak it, you might get arrested and detained and end up  
in prison.[...][102-104]The community where I come from they say that it is  
wicked. It's devilish.[...] And yet, yourself, you know inside what you  
are.[...][114-118][...] it was bothering me, leaving me even more confused,  
because every time I tried to see..., am I different from others? [...] So..., I was  
just feeling bad when I hear people..., even the government itself banning  
gays.[...] so you have to pretend [...].[121-126]For me, I got married when I

was 21 years old, immediately after my college. So, because I was 21, my parents, they got me into planned marriage.[...] I felt it's like cover.[...] Though, it was also very difficult.[...][128-130]Ok, I can say that it was very hard for me to get through..., every time, because I faced domestic violence. Because my husband used to complain that I was not engaging with him intimately.

Stella's positioning in relation to her marriage can be read twofold. It is an active search for protection against the systemic violence that a likely exposure of her sexuality would have warranted (violence in a queer positioning); thus, affording Stella agency. It is also a sign of powerlessness, reflecting cultural and hierarchical understandings of (young) women's subjectivities within patriarchal social and familial contexts. Within marriage, her suffering is shaped through struggling to integrate her lesbian subjectivity with her identity as a (pretending-to-be-straight) wife. In telling the story of resisting sexual intercourse, Stella defines and privileges her identity as an agentic (lesbian) woman. Nevertheless, her sexuality is yet again stripped off of her, controlled and (ab)used, becoming a site where gender-based violence is perpetrated (violence in a straight positioning).

Stella's intersectional identity constitutes both concealing and 'coming out' as dangerous territories. Her story speaks to the context of being a woman in a gender-inequality setting. Her journey into the UK and her inability to return are controlled by her husband and father, constructed as able to threaten and reject. Through the narration of her female partner's story, Stella depicts the graphic atrocities that the exposure of one's LGBT sexuality entails in that geo-politico-social space:

[246-250]Cause even when I was working he [husband] was the one who was controlling my wages and everything, yeah. So, when I got the chance to come here [UK], he told me go! Because he thought that I would get a wage increase and that then he would end up controlling [...].But when I was here, something happened that made me not to go back. My partner was arrested.[...][273-286]But the moment she was arrested she was tortured to reveal about our relationship.[...] So, he called me [...].You know, he shouted, sounded agitated, he was angry calling me names and he swore that if I

stepped back he was gonna kill me. And that's how I remained here, confused.[...] Even my parents, even my father rejected me.[...][373-377]Because it makes me feel bad when I see people like my partner. I don't know where she is, and she did not commit any crime.[...] WHY? Why should you be a criminal [...] because you are a lesbian? No. It doesn't make sense.

Stella actively responds to the criminalisation of sexuality by questioning its premises and, thus, goes on to occupy a narrative position of resistance. Having a relationship with another woman despite the restrictions and societal condemnation and her husband's control, constitutes an active response of defiance. Stella builds on her counternarrative, as an agentic person, by responding to adversities with a smile. Her story of resistance shapes a 'self' who is different both qualitatively (smiles) and through temporal definitions (*still* smiles). The 'self' that smiles is performed alongside the 'self' that suffers:

[62-67]What makes me different is that despite the challenges that I am facing, I can still smile. Before, I used to cry and cry all alone in my bedroom [...].Like for example, I've got kids back home that I left.[...].Crying because you are a mother and at the same time you are running away from your own people.[...][85-87] But, I remember that at that time I was suffering. I had depression and anxiety, you know. Even when I came here. Because you know that you are hoping for something that is not coming.

Stella contextualises her suffering in the dualities of being abandoned by her network and abandoning her children for her safety and being hopeful while hope is not materialised; the latter becoming legible by Stella's continuing encounter with the uncertainties, injustices, and maltreatment emanating from the explication of her intersectionality (Black, African, lesbian, asylee, woman) in the UK context. Her suffering gets expressed and is defined by a medicalised language, possibly influenced by an overbearing western medicalised environment, alongside Stella's dialogical interaction with my presence and identity as a TCP.

Stella continues to redefine herself and her positioning through transforming the accidental exposure of her sexuality, whilst in the UK, to an agentic 'coming out'.

This is supported by her reproducing dominant readings of the UK as safe, which in turn invites the re-scripting of lesbian sexuality as publicly acceptable. Stella's reclaiming of 'coming out' is an act of resistance against silencing; polyphonic nonetheless, as it is simultaneously marked by trepidation and hope. Stella narrativizes a liminal 'self', still haunted by the threat of exposure of the past, whilst hoping for emotional release in openly living her sexuality in the present and future:

[42-44]At first you get tense because you don't know how people will see you,[...].But I've come to realise that this country is different; they just take it..., you as normal person.[333-335] Cause my main challenge was to open up and I'm glad that now at least I'm opening up, because my hope was to start telling people who I am!

Stella's narrativisation of 'coming out' is also inscribed within the asylum-seeking context, which privileges an open celebration of one's sexuality. That is, that juridical pressures concerning the evidencing of LGBT identities transform sexual stories from private accounts to public statements.

#### *4.1.2.2. A story about healing*

Stella constructs 'healing' by means of being open about her sexuality and engaging with community support, storying this newfound sense of belonging as 'home':

[2-7]Since I opened up, [...] things have started opening up for me, because before I had fear talking and in the end I was just lonely [...].But now, I am getting support from friends, cause now I'm making friends. And I've realised [...] that there are also other people and we can share and through that we are encouraging each other. So, I can say that at the moment I feel like I'm home here.

[357-361] It is easier, because [...] I've been engaging with the club. They say, you know, that in this country you are not by yourself. So, with that one I already have confidence, cause I know that even if I disclose my sexuality there is no one attacking me, I won't be persecuted because of my sexuality.

The above constitute two parallel processes of healing. On an individual level, Stella's engagement with the LGBT refugee community provides a safe space, whereby she can perform her sexual identity freely in affirmative ways. This space is shaped discursively through the narration of stories of predicament, courage, friendship and confidence. Through the act of story-telling a sense of togetherness (collective healing) is constructed, which also redefines public space (UK) as welcoming and safe, allowing for new forms of existences (public) to emerge. Again, collusion with the dominant narrative that the West is not homophobic is evident here.

Stella constructs other forms of being, also through our dialogical transaction. Her story cuts through monolithic representations of the 'asylee' and 'LGBT' identities and creates space for witnessing her skills, interests, and being a mother. Through story-telling, Stella engages in new forms of connecting with her children that negate physical distances. Those connections happen through dialogical means between her and her memories with her son, to construct *present* (see grammar) opportunities for affirmation, resistances, and smiles:

[299-305] I like sports.

TCP: What kind of sports?

Swimming. I am a good swimmer! [...] Also, I like arts. I am not an artist. My son is an artist. He can just look at you and draw you. Those are the things that make me smile. I almost forget about what I am going through..

Sometimes he tells me "mummy just stay the way you are".

#### 4.1.2.3. A story about 'not giving up'

Stella constructs herself as a strong person, interminably fighting and hoping for a better future. Hope and strength are shaped through dialogue with both her cultural heritage and community she is part of, which affords a collective direction for social justice. In Stella's story, hope is inextricably linked with freedom to be open about her sexuality:

[69-74] Hope, hope. Even when I was crying one day all alone, [...] I would say "one day I will come out", "one day things will start opening up" [...].



TCP: And where is that hope coming from?

I can say from the support and courage that I am getting now.

[184-191][...] in our culture..., giving up is the last thing..., in ANY, any situation.[...] So, in our culture they say that giving up or quitting is a NO, NO, NO. Yeah, and that is what has been making me to be... it's like a tiny hope. That's why I never give up despite everything. You can see even in that marriage, you are facing domestic violence and I never gave up! I never QUITTED!. I stayed no matter what, let it come the way it is coming. The life must go on.

I wonder about the repetition in Stella's speech and the emphatic use of words to denote acts of not quitting. Particularly, I wonder about the function of the narrative: to remind, to support, to convince (whom), to affirm (why)? How might her current circumstances (not being able to return to her children) be interpreted under dominant heteronormative and cultural values?

The hope that one day she can be free, being sustained by her strong culturally-informed disposition to be a fighter, alongside collective support, constitute a useful compass to Stella's journey. Through story-telling, Stella constructs a corrective script, according to which her commitment to her marriage is not bound by love, submission, or fear, but by taking an active stance against adversity: never quit. This stance is performed both explicitly (not leaving) and implicitly (maintaining hope) and actively reflects cultural and societal values. Through this talk, Stella constructs womanhood as strong and agentic; a subordinate narrative challenging the male dominance story. I also wonder to what extent Stella's 'fighter' voice is informed by an idiosyncratic construal of the intersection of being Black and queer in a White-dominating and heteronormative world.

#### 4.1.3. Dom:[14-15]"Love Comes In All Forms, So Love Fully And Love Equally"

On the cover page of his passport, Dom painted a picture of a rainbow and a heart. Adopting popular western LGBT symbols, Dom finds a platform to construct a universal message about love, kindness, and belonging. His story serves as a

testament to a 'self' that has transformed the endured pain and wrong-doing into a valued cause for equality and peace.

#### *4.1.3.1. The survivor story*

Dom's story constructs the UK and the micro-cosmos of our dialogical transaction as safe contexts to introduce himself as a Muslim gay man. His story-telling shapes an empowering synthesis of his multiple identities:

[34-47]So, I came here [...] which makes me to bring more ideas in my mind, especially the first thing that I can have my own rights, especially on the basis of being a Muslim gay man. [...] So,[...] I've got no fear in my heart or my mind to hide myself anymore, as I used to be.

Dom makes a distinction between two different temporal and geographical realities: his existences in Asia and the UK. In the former context, his being is restricted by fear, whereas in the latter Dom assumes a position of an activist, performing an empowered 'self', aware of their rights. This opens up new subjectivities, including a sexual and gendered 'self' that can be openly expressed. Dom's speech constructs human rights as highly contextual, in need to be discovered and only accessible in a western context, mirroring his experiences in his country of origin:

[58-91][...] When they found out that I am a gay man,[...] I got a lot of restrictions on me, not going out.[...] Just going to school and from school to home.[...] So,[...], it was a big shame, especially for my family, like they were saying "you put your head down in front of the rest of family members" and there was [...] no connection with brothers and sisters or dad but only mum. Mums are mums [...]. So,[...] I convinced [father] and he let me to come here. But he only let me to come here because one of his friends was here, [...]. So, I came to the UK and I lived with him [...]. And during this time again the same things happened like back home,[...] like in our culture, especially back home like in my family, I am the youngest in the family, so whatever any elder say to you, you have to listen.[...] And it was the same when I came here. He was like ordering me [...], not letting me go out. So, I was like caught in a bit of depression and I started having some medical issues as well and there was

no support. My dad would not speak to me [...] so, it's like he disowned me.[...] It was kind of more like a jail I would say, than a home.[...] At least after seven and a half years he left the country [...] and after a few days I found the club and then I started going there, making friends, talking about my situation, listening to their stories. So, it's like you're not alone, surviving, and that there are plenty of people like me, on the same level, same basis, like survivors.[...] So, then I started making myself to go out openly, and I now, I can call myself in front of everyone "yes, I am a gay man".

The above extract constitutes an example of multiple subjectivities (inner and outer polyphony) as performed and created by Dom's story-telling. Dom starts his narration by constructing a shameful 'self'. Shame is experienced internally, following exposure of his sexuality, and externally as part of the family system. Shame is located within dominant religious, cultural, and societal values and norms, which construct homosexuality as abnormal and prohibited. Consequently, Dom performs a disowned and isolated 'self', having been outcasted by his significant others. Nevertheless, within the dominant voice of exclusion, his relationship with his mother is shaped as a small exception, grounded within the context of all-loving motherhood, constructed here as superordinate to familial and societal contexts. The restrictions applied to Dom's everyday life concern a range of disciplinary practices, aiming at re-constructing Dom's sexuality, by limiting his relational existence within particular spatial contexts (school, home).

Dom's voice of resistance ('I am a gay man') is not constructed as straightforwardly marginal (nor dominant) at that temporal space. Rather, it is interwoven with the cultural values, which determined his positioning in relation to the elders. This positioning does not create a powerless 'self', but one that actively resists dominant constructions of homosexuality through the known cultural means that were available to him at the time. That is, Dom does not separate sexuality from his roots and heritage, constructing an idiosyncratic relationship with the culture in which he grew up, which forms the basis for past, present, and future resistances. The storying of cultural nuances, shapes the platform whereby Dom reconciles rejection:

[212-215]Uhhhh, the thing which I learnt from my culture is being kind with everyone, being a strong man, spread love, [...]. And accept whatever you are. So, these [...] makes me strong and able to pass through all these situations which I've been through.

Nevertheless, the integration of cultural values and sexual identity is performed from a place of oppression (living a supervised life) with limited means and, thus, synchronously produces an incarcerated 'self' who suffers. Dom's engaging with an affirmative supportive network in London is commensurate to novel existences. This engagement happens also through narrative means (stories himself and connects with other people's storied selves), in such ways that shape a collective survivors' identity. Through such means of collective resistance, Dom constructs a safe base to be open about his sexuality, despite the initial discomfort that his use of "making myself"[90] betrays. Perhaps, this can be understood within the differential contexts to which Dom has been exposed, and the difficulties inherent in re-writing his script of what is safe and not. The emphasis on openness within the asylum-seeking context might have also constituted Dom's assuming a more open position of resistance in the UK.

Dom's attempt to construct a cohesive account of selfhood is reflected also in the ways he stories his relationship with religion:

[94-101][...]The only hope which I have is like it's coming from my nature, from God in my mind, that "one day you will get out of it".[...] so, in the darkness and loneliness I was only speaking with God. So, it was kind of a one-way talk and there was nothing in return, but there was still a little hope.

God is not constructed here as persecutory or reprimanding, but rather as an accepting figure that provides a refuge from solitude and exclusion. By Dom's saying that "Islam says that everything stands on love and peace." [237], he challenges normative assumptions about the incompatibility of Islamic religion and gay sexuality. Moreover, through his dialogical transactions with God, Dom shapes a hopeful 'self' that survives. Thus, individual acts of resistance are inextricably linked with Dom's identity as a Muslim person. As such, his narrative may constitute a subjugated story

against the dominant western understanding of Muslim religion as restrictive and oppressive. However, it's a gendered relationship. Dom, as a man, constructs a spiritual partnership with God, who is commonly attributed male features. I wonder whether a female or transgender positioning may have invited similar, alternative, or pluralistic perspectives.

#### *4.1.3.2. A story 'from the heart'*

Dom's story-telling, carried through an emotional intonation, reshapes experiences of suffering into a direction for the future (performing individual resistance). This future is constructed on the basis of being loving, giving back, and making a home. The vitality in his speech is congruent with the newly-found sense of being free (living supervision-free). Interestingly, the adversities and limitations imposed by asylum-seeking and life in the UK are absent here, which may be reflective of Dom's need to maintain hope to keep on fighting for asylum in Britain:

[14-19][...] that picture says that "love comes in all forms, so love fully and love equally" and it just shows a heart with full of love and full of colours. So, in that heart, full of colour [...] brings each and every single person in one heart. So, love comes in different forms; it could be for brother, for mother, it could be your lover. So, love is for everyone and have different colours.

Dom speaks about love as a superordinate context, creating a sense of commonality despite difference. This might be understood as an attempt to transform the context of discrimination he has been subjected to as previously witnessed. Therefore, through his understanding of sexuality in the realms of loving and being loved, Dom constructs unity in division (sexuality categories, racial/sexuality-based discrimination, hate), in ways that afford him an empowering position. There are two sub-stories in the above extract: one shapes love as a universal right and the other highlights the diversity inherent in the act of loving. From an activist's position, Dom's interpretation of love and sexuality generates a sense of togetherness, a collective form of healing and resistance against isolation (everyone lives in the same heart). This affords Dom a place of empathy and giving back, which also offers immunity against hate and a drive for keeping going:

[163-166][...]I have feelings for everybody[...]. And I'm there to help whoever will ask me for help, whatever the help and as much as I can.

Despite structural and historical disadvantages, Dom's account of resistance constructs a 'self' that dreams and re-shapes valued forms of normality. In constructing home as an equal space, Dom performs an empowered and valued 'self', whose needs and presence are acknowledged within the context of ordinary transactions with valued others. These contexts allow for creative forms of healing to surface, which privilege collective and interpersonal understandings:

[134-151][...] Home for me is where I can have my own little paradise. Where I can have a family, friends, where I can say to them what I am, and they listen to me and support me.[...] Because, more than half of my life I just listen, but nobody listens to me.[...] It could be any routine work or anything, like general talk or daily routine, whatever.

Dom's interpretation of home paints utopian ideals (paradise), which however, he goes on to ground within seeming attainable realities; being able to openly express his identity as a gay man. His interpretation of gay life in the UK as devoid of any struggles is shaded here, as equality is performed in the form of a wish, having not fully materialised yet. Racialised othering, homophobic discrimination, structural disempowerment, and asylum stress may be alluded to here, as contexts whereby the dream for a better life in the UK is compromised for racialised Muslim gay asylum-seeking people. Therefore, Dom's story is inherently polyphonic, being simultaneously shaped by the dimensions of hope, resistance, and struggle.

#### 4.1.4. Kaba:[15] "What Makes Me, Me Is Being Free"

Kaba's narrativisation of her 'Passport of Life' suggests a concatenation of attempts to construct freedom. Freedom is not pictured as an abstract intellectualised concept or even as only a given/obtained human right. Rather, it is the context within which a pluralism of subjectivities is crafted. Freedom here is tantamount to existing. Put differently, without freedom no forms of personhood can exist.

#### 4.1.4.1. A story about freedom

As Kaba articulates, “If you are not free it’s difficult for you to express yourself mentally, physically, emotionally”[65-66]. The free ‘self’ is, therefore, an embodied experience that provides a platform from which Kaba makes sense of her journey. Kaba narrativises her freedom within contexts, each giving rise to different subjectivities:

99-107][...]I realise now that you feel a bit free when you talk about it [...]. It’s like you have all these thoughts in your head,[...] but you can’t tell because you have no one who can tell you [...] “this child is not the same as any other”.[...] It’s just now that I’m trying to go back then and say, “Oh my God,[...] this is who I was”, but I couldn’t tell, because the pain was too much hard and I didn’t know what it was all about.

Freedom here is constructed on the basis of a queer sexuality being allowed to be expressed and made sense of. Kaba’s narrative articulates queer *bodies* as captives within a societal context that does not allow free expression. Through a process of a historic inner dialogue, Kaba performs a queer ‘self’ that, in its very existence, challenges heteronormative sexuality discourses. This ‘self’ cannot be understood due to its lack of representation in the cultural and societal spheres. This ‘self’ is erased from the local geography of sexualities and, unlike the western dominant position, its expression in the context of Africa is synonymous to a felt sense, a direction, rather than shaped by means of language, labels, and identity talk.

In the UK, which privileges identity descriptors, Kaba comes into contact with a new grammar to understanding her queer subjectivity. In her speech act, she rewrites the vernacular of her sexuality in a process of continuous self-discovery. This provides a new-found sense of freedom, which Kaba also equates to voicing the ‘unspeakable’. Nevertheless, ‘coming out’ is constituted as simultaneously a valued and “difficult”[56] experience, in the context of ongoing and past threat, and the bridging of old and new expectations (e.g. asylum); thus, crafting polyphony as the only relevant rubric under which to depict BME LGBT asylee liveability.

By preserving polyphony, Kaba's story resists the monolithic depiction of BME queer sexuality across the two contexts (i.e. oppressed in Africa versus celebrated in the UK). Her story is seen as an attempt to discursively construct a free identity within the context of oppressive and marginalising legal procedures:

[238-253][...]I was forced to move.[...] and when you go to gain your freedom people say that they don't believe you. But you know who you say you are.[...] And I'm still having old memories from back home, "will I be accepted or rejected, like back home?".[...] Fear comes to my mind.[...] So, the barriers that I face here are that I'm not able to be free. [...] You don't have a home, you cannot work, you cannot travel.[...] I do sign every two weeks at the home office.[269-270][...] you're gonna believe at one day, because I am still who I am and I'm not gonna change who I am.

The western socio-political zeitgeist transforms Kaba's subjectivity into a fabricated one. Through her story Kaba performs a fearful and stuck 'self' in relation to both current and historic denial of her personhood. In this climate, she responds by discursively strengthening her queer identity against a backdrop of seemingly disjointed contexts (race, sexuality, citizenship, ethnicity). Nevertheless, she does not say 'I know who I am'. Rather, it is in the very act of telling that she becomes. The use of "you" invites a rendition of a collective struggle, suggesting that the re-affirmation of BME LGBT asylee people's identities through self-talk is an act of resistance against a culture of racism, disbelief, and geo-political exclusion. The fixedness of sexual identity echoed in her speech, mirrors global western understandings of an immutable sexuality and might be understood as a need to craft safety and cohesion based on what is known.

#### *4.1.4.2. A story of Gods and demons*

This story attests to Kaba's resisting the demonisation of her queer existence, whilst constructing an (in)cohesive identity that is in constant movement, interminably shaped by its surroundings:

[31-40][...] like most of the time, we belong to a group [...] so, I think me being in [community club][...] I can be able to relate to people, like I have skills,[...]



which I got it from my culture.[...] I wouldn't want to take it away because...  
uhmmm..., I'm a lesbian person. No.[...] I put them into practice along the  
way in my new life, in my new findings that I've become.[190-192][...]  
speaking about [community club], I would really want to give back, because  
[...] they stood up for me,[...] heard my story, and [...] comforted me. [261-  
265] Before I came to the [community club] I was just a mess, because I didn't  
have anybody to talk to. I now feel able to express myself.[...] Everyday, we  
hear good news about people who have succeeded [...].So, why will I not  
keep going, hoping that one day is gonna be better for me as well?

Kaba's story-telling constructs some sense of cohesion between her life in Africa and the UK through the performance of a relational/collective identity. Her performance aims at scaffolding a bridge between her African identity and cultural skills and her lesbian identity, suggesting that the two can co-exist in ways that provide Kaba with a sense of direction and stability, amidst constant evolution of the 'self' in exile. Kaba's account is bold and challenges global and regional perspectives regarding the incompatibility between being African and LGBT, alongside ideas regarding the inflexibility of 'self'. Her collective integrated identity provides a site whereby new forms of (collective) support and wellbeing are fashioned. These are established upon mutual processes of being heard and giving back, being comforted and creating hope, constituting an empowering response to collective struggle.

Kaba's relational subjectivity shapes her understanding of sexuality, privileging discourses of love and unity; thus, resisting the overbearing of sexual discourses in understanding queer sexualities in the West. The inherited grammar of togetherness provides a context whereby Kaba can perform self-acceptance:

[76-78][...] so, we are meant to live together as one people, like they say love is love, it doesn't matter if it comes from [...] a woman to a woman [...].[282-283] But above all, we still want to learn this thing that we have, that we are. Like what is it? We still want to learn it.

Kaba's story-telling shapes queer African sexualities as different within a context of unity, placing queer narratives within the pantheon of universal human experience;

thus, resisting the process of othering. Nevertheless, this difference still needs to be understood and metabolised. In this context, Kaba's narrativisation of her queer 'self' might be seen as a means to produce knowledge about her sexuality and, thus, making the invisible visible. Kaba's account also suggests that understanding one's sexuality is a context-mediated evolving process that cannot be confined within certain categorical stages (see western models of sexuality development).

Kaba's drawing unity in difference to negotiate multiple subjectivities and inform survival mechanisms is also evident through her relationship with God:

[119-125][...] if I think that He created everybody in life under the image of Himself so, it doesn't mean I'm different [...] everytime I now say "can You guide me to where I am supposed to go [...]?"[138-149][...] and they took me to..., like a Father to pray for me, and he was condemning me, and he did say "[...], I think that you are possessed, I think that you are a demon". So, then I realised that I got no hope.[...] So, what I ended up doing was to stick to her [mum] and listen to everything she wanted me to do and I was hoping that someday I was going to get out of it [...].

Kaba's narration shapes religion as a site of both hopefulness and hopelessness. Her creating God as accepting and loving offers possibilities of overcoming, while her demonisation by the church reinforces a sense of powerlessness. Kaba's response (going along with her mother's wishes) reflects the dominant values of her African context and little power she had at the time, as a young woman. It is also storied as born out of the context of hopelessness and the need to protect herself against the cruelty of dominant societal rectification practices. Above all, Kaba's story courageously creates a context of resistance, as it undermines dominant portrayals of LGBT people as atheists and challenges long-held Christian values (Kaba identifies as Christian) regarding sexuality as a means to procreation.

## **4.2. Collective Stories**

This section is born out of the collective discussions that took place during the final part of the story-telling. Here, individual narratives of crossing, movement, hardship,

and overcoming are collectivised to reflect a community of humans striving to flow through time, space, structural, and discursive barriers. The very act of flowing forms an act of resistance within the context of the fixedness of borders and its figurative meaning. In understanding and conveying participants' stories, I was struck by the unequivocal message that "we are humans; you also need to be heard and feel understood"[Kaba:442]. The below reflect participants' endeavour to making their experiences accessible to themselves and the public, to be understood and acknowledged in an act of self-redefinition.

#### 4.2.1. A Story about 'Othering'

Participants' storied experiences shape LGBT refugee bodies as suspicious, deceptive, unskilled. Reading the extract below, one is struck by the dominant monolithic representations of this community, which begs the question of *'who gets to define LGBT refugee people's existences?'*:

[Kelvin:6-9][...] As long as you are from another country, which is not [...] westernised or developed,[...] they cannot trust you to be here.[Kaba:46-115][...] the first thing is that coming from a black community or from Africa, you won't really know what is LGBT, because you are not really educated on that.[...] And we cannot be able to open up [...], cause we don't know what it is.[...] Because the first person we did tell was actually a bad sign.[...] they say that [...] they don't see the fear in you.[...] how can you prove this? [...] they always put in front of you, like "oh I think you are not telling the truth", "I think where you are coming from [...] most people [...] nothing has happened to them. Why you be the only one?"[...] the government might still accept me, my sexuality, but as an individual your family might not [...].The community might not.[...] You are still an outcast. [Bobby:117-125] [...] They are mixing your religion with your sexuality. [...] They ask, "if you are a Muslim, you are praying, you are wearing a hijab how come you are a lesbian?"[...] I am an asylum-seeker, I don't have money, I don't drink alcohol, so what do I do? They want this type of evidence. [Kaba:129-137][...] And they push you so far to do these things and this leads to depression, [...] because you push yourself to do things that you are not able to afford, [...] to prove a point [...].[...] Like, we don't have gay clubs in Africa [...] we don't go out, those

things.[Bobby:150-151] And then if you go to the Home Office, they say you are not looking gay. What is this?[Kaba:154] Yeah, how can you explain when someone says you're too strong for a gay person?

In participants' story-telling, the asylum-seeking context is privileged over the refugee, perhaps owing to its considerably more unsafe connotations. In the UK asylum process, sexuality (invisible) is read on the basis of visible ethnic, religious, and cultural differences. That is, as Kelvin's and Bobby's stories highlight, one's sexuality is seen through the prism of racial and ethnic dichotomies, rendering particular subjectivities trustworthy and desirable while others not. This process of othering, based on the constructed racial superiority of the White person, is conducive to judging sexuality-based asylum claims under a normative and catholic gaze. Kaba's and Bobby's narration is a testament to this, as LGBT asylee people are pushed to confine their subjectivities within homonormative discourses. These privilege particular voices, which construct the 'genuine' LGBT refugee person as eager and open about their sexuality, persecuted by the state, educated about LGBT matters, atheist, outgoing, damaged, and embodying stereotypical LGBT phenotypes. This overshadows participants' intersectional individualities, as well as the structural inequalities that they face (racism, unemployment, destitution). For instance, authorities neglect to take into account participants' multi-layered experiences of rejection, which fails to acknowledge the importance of the collective identity in non-western contexts (someone being unsafe within their family). Othering also obscures the risks and ambivalence in the practice of coming out, which again privileges western assumptions.

The lack of an external polyphonic understanding of LGBT people's experience, restricts one's inner polyphony, giving rise to constricted selfhood. Two aspects become salient in the above text, one constitutes LGBT people as fighters having to continually navigate an unjust system, pushing themselves through their limits, whilst the other shapes them as depressed, highlighting the onus of the process and the disempowerment that characterises this community's circumstances. It is interesting to notice how LGBT refugee people's emotional positions are shaped through their narration and within such oppressive contexts. For example, Kaba's story of who gets to define one's emotional world, and its expression, is understood within a

dominant discourse, picturing refugee people as afraid and damaged, in need of the help of a merciful West; reminiscent of racialised and post-colonialist discourses. This constrains nuanced understandings of people's emotional positions (being both strong and scared), reducing their storied selves to monolithic stereotypical categories that, failing to satisfy, can lead to disbelief and deportation.

In contrast, what is being performed through participants' narration is a BME LGBT refugee/asylee identity that is polyphonic in nature, contexts, and practice; but also one that has been reduced, wronged, mislabelled, misjudged, racially abused, and devalued. In this context, participants' collective narration constitutes an act of collective resistance, being formed within a dominant place (to prove what the authorities want/need). It is also a marginal resistance, being articulated from an intersectional place of disadvantage:

[Kelvin:259-261][...] you don't have to do something to be reminded of being a refugee.[Dom:283-284] If you want to rent a room when they see the card they look at you [...] Like you are a burden or something.

[Bobby:370-372] A lot of people are well-educated and they think we are fourth class people.[...] We did not come here for bread and butter. We have a lot of things in our country.

[Dom:237-238] We are still a human being.[...] Do I need to prove that I'm not a horse or a dog, that I am a human?

Through their narratives, participants challenge dominant restrictive definitions of refugee people as inferior and burdensome beings, by creating space for new insights, privileging people's skills, abilities, cultural and ethnic wealth. They also story their subjectivities within the superordinate context of being a human. Through highlighting equality in their understanding of what is to be human, participants resist othering discourses by bridging cultural, racial, ethnic, geographical, sexuality, gender, religious, economic, and institutional boundaries.

#### 4.2.2. The Story of 'Us'

Participants respond to the structural and discursive adversities that comprise the flow (aka journey) into the UK and beyond through the construction of a collective

identity. Collective subjectivities are founded upon mutual support, encouragement, and advice, in such ways that create purpose, hope, and direction:

[Kaba:408-411]What keeps me going is definitely hearing about someone like Kelvin, who has went through this process and [...] and he's still with us.[...] That means that us as a community, we still have US! [Kelvin:413-414][...] like this organisation, our club, our chairman, he prepares you mentally, saying "you will face this, you will come against this" [...].[Dom:418-461][...] when you are in a group, you can get a lot of courage you know, and see someone [...] from the same background, the same problems,[...] and he got granted.[...] so, when he's been through and he got it, of course I can get it too.[...] So, when you have [...] a whole community with you, standing by your side saying that "yes, this person is this", of course there is something.[522-527] I think the thing which we are doing right now,[...] bringing what he thinks, what she thinks, what I think, I think together when we do this, make [...] impactful knowledge to let everybody know. Together we bring different ideas, different stories,[...] everybody has it different.

By stressing the 'us', Kaba's story blurs the boundaries between two subjectivities. That is, 'having us', a form of positioning in a collective comradeship, becomes 'us', constituting a new form of collective existence. This type of existence is shaped through participants' speech as larger than its parts, leading to new forms of belonging. It also creates hope and acts, as Kelvin notes, as a psychological shield against the difficulties navigating the system. Interestingly, Dom's story constitutes individual existences as embedded within the collective identity. That is, that the collective identity provides space for individual subjectivities to be witnessed, acknowledged, defined, and socially validated to withstand public invalidation. Togetherness is constructed upon both a sense of being similar and different and, in so doing, it forms a subordinate narrative to the dominant normative monolithic discourse shaping BME LGBT refugee people's experiences in the UK.

Finally, it is this collective existence that provides the context for collective acts of resistance:

[Dom:98-100] So, there is still a lot of hatred, and [...] as a community we can raise this awareness, and we can change this.[...] And together we will!

[Kelvin:323-327] I think what can be changed is if we refugees,[...], we write our own stories, our narrative that is supposed to be, the Home Office to be educated more [...].[...] to create awareness [...] and say “it doesn’t look like this! [376-378][...] if you have more communities [...] to support us, to make our voices louder [...] it would really help.[495-511][...] if you have an ally in that category [politician], [...] they can revisit the laws [...]. And also, another ally we can make is the mainstream media.[...] If you make an ally, they can say something positive about us and make a difference.[Kaba:584-585][...] it has to start from us! We’ve shared our stories mostly to interviewers when we go to the Home Office. But, what happens to other people,[...] hearing, listening to us?[614-616] When I heard about this project., “oh how am I gonna do it?” I know it is the fear of the challenges we have had, being able to say these things over and over again. But we really need to persist on this, being able to share in this whole participation.

In the extract above, collective resistance is framed by means of social action. Participants’ story-telling constructs the LGBT refugee person, within the context of a collective identity, as an agentic being who has the power to author their own stories, and form alliances to challenge some of the disadvantageous narratives that define the community. Social action creates a context of healing, which is fostered by a discursive redefinition of LGBT refugee people, reflecting and being reflected upon participants’ authorship of their stories; this time under and for the public gaze. Nevertheless, participants’ narrative strikes a nuanced understanding between a positioning of a fighter and that of fear, in their context of exposure and re-iteration of traumatic experiences, the overcoming of which might be enabled from a place of collective existence and through participation. Queer narratives of vulnerability emerge here from an agentic place, as vulnerability gets to be defined by BME LGBT refugee/asylee people’s own articulation of their experiences.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, I will review findings in relation to extant literature, to respond to the research aims. I will then engage in critically and reflexively appraising the present project, to conclude by highlighting key recommendations for clinical practice, research, and policy/legal proceedings.

### **5.1. Does Collective Resistance Generate a Process of Healing?**

To answer this question, I will first observe how collective resistance is defined in participants' speech. Participants resist contextual maltreatment and the misrepresentation of their storied subjectivities through both discursive and structural means. That is, through narration and through forming (physical) spaces of belonging in exile. Forms of resistance can be reviewed here under the collective umbrella, as apart from the 'coming together' process, participants' stories are in constant dialogue with the BME and LGBT movements, alongside collective historical, cultural, and ancestral memories of survivorhood.

Participants' speech constructs healing as an individual and collective process of becoming. It includes a synthesis of subjectivities, both at individual and whole-group levels, and is performed in ways that galvanise the integration and acceptance of the queer 'self'. Specifically, findings suggest that community formations afforded participants the right to live their queerness openly away from socio-politico-cultural censorship. The creation of the liberated queer survivors' identity can be understood from a sociological vantage point as mediated by the proliferation of LGBT stories in modern western society (Plummer, 1995). This forms the foundation of the 'outing' process, rendering the open expression of queer sexuality as celebrated. From a psychological perspective, the act of togetherness creates a positive representation of queerness in public spheres. As in Oliver (2002), the queer 'self' is re-configured by affirming discursive practices, which in turn enables feeling safe in being accepted. This transaction between the psyche and the social can produce geographies of agentic resistances: the queer outing against historic and present oppressive contexts.



Being part of the collective also accounts for multiple reformulations of subjectivities that de-construct stereotypical views of participants' existences. Their narration creates healing through actively challenging the objectification of refugee bodies by social, cultural, and state actors (see Woolley, 2014), depicting people who dream, are skilled, miss, long, hope, and contribute. Thus, this research supports Logie et al.'s (2016) findings regarding the impact of social support on BME LGBT forced migrant people's positive identity construction, positing that self-redefinition happens through discursive means, also reflected on the collective level. As in Fobear (2017), collective re-authoring is replicated here as an act of political resistance against othering constructions. Those stories are not just abstract accounts, but saturated with affect; an embodied experience, yet ever-shifting and context-mediated.

Furthermore, collective spaces are transformed as sites of hopeful conversations. These are scaffolded upon a shared understanding of the new context and its challenges, suggesting, as in Kahn and colleagues (2017,2018) and Logie and colleagues (2016), that information sharing can produce pathways of certainty and containment. We may view collective knowledge production as a form of empowerment in Foucauldian terms (1980), enabling participants to interrogate the representation of their multiple subjectivities in both asylum and refugee contexts, whilst learning to survive the system. Additionally, hope is shaped by processes of mutual encouragement and success witnessing, translating the 'we can do it' into the 'I can do it', paralleled with the witnessing process in narrative theorising (Denborough, 2008; White, 2007). The present study extends Alessi's (2016) conclusions regarding the pivotal role of hope in post-trauma growth, enabling its conceptualisation within the tenets of social, discursive, and structural formations that carve it.

Overall, this research has shown that forms of collective resistance can enable pathways of activism, which produces a grammar of collective strength. As in Watkins and Schulman (2008), healing is theorised here in the intersection between bottom-up empowerment and delivering on social justice, connecting with Taracena's (2018) conclusions, concerning the instrumental nature of BME queer refugee togetherness for survival and wellbeing. The present study adds to

international scholarship by placing healing at the epicentre of collective processes of resistance, suggesting that the former is not a by-product of the latter, but an active process of individual and collective empowerment constitutive of and constituted by collective belonging. Put differently, healing is not something that social support *does* to BME LGBT refugee and asylee people, rather it is bound by the very active process of coming together, which has re-definitional, hope-inducing, and social justice properties. Therefore, 'having us' (having support) is transformed to 'being us' (we are the support).

## **5.2. How Do BME LGBT Forced Migrant People's Storied Intersectional Contexts Inform Chosen Resistance Pathways?**

This research shows that the ways that participants respond(ed) to abusive realities reflects their position in a web of personal, relational, familial, socio-politico-cultural, (inter)national, structural, and discursive geographies. For many, any forms of resistance needed to abide by cultural and familial heritages to be acceptable to the 'self' (see Dom, Kaba). Participants' resistance has also been shaped by the construction of their sexuality, creating space for overcoming a twofold process of silencing. That is, that participants' stories challenge(d) the heteronormative definitional practices in their countries of origin as well as the erasure of their queer existence by the Home Office under the gaze of disbelief and suspicion. In the former context, the social reading of minority sexualities as abnormal, devilish, and threatening, leads to the emergence of subtle forms of resistance (inner dialogical processes, forming secret relationships). As in Berg and Millbank (2009) and Yoshino (2006), participants talked about trying to embody heteronormative lifestyles to ensure safety, whilst continuing to dream and long for freedom, equality, and queer love; thus, not succumbing to the dominant position of non-existent queer sexualities, by replicating self-denying practices. Such forms of resistance are inextricably linked to participants' experiences of threat, and, as in Fisher (2008), constitute the primary agentic medium for reconciling diverse sexuality and ethnic and cultural memberships.

Although there is evidence of censorship and control of queer lives across all participants' narratives, this research suggests that lesbian women may be under

more pressure to engage in heteronormative practices (e.g. getting married, having children) and, as in Moore (2019), more vulnerable to harm. Stella's account is telling of how 'going underground' is not sufficiently protective against gender-based (sexual) violence. Bearing witness to her female partner's torture, also present in Pepper (2005), she boldly places torture within the intersection of being a lesbian woman, a form of existence that resists dismantling under the violence of patriarchal policing (UNHCR, 2003); thus, forming a subordinate narrative to dominant victimisation accounts.

Covert resistance pathways are transformed to a process of public outing in the UK, replicating reverse covering trajectories reported by Berasi (2019). Here, resistance mechanisms are inscribed in the context of seeking asylum. The utility of old survival mechanisms is re-examined, as one's denied refuge is linked to one's failure to embody and replicate predominant western understandings of diverse sexualities, and particularly the heavily invested process of 'coming out' (Luibhéid, 2008). Participants' 'coming out' stories construct experiences of othering by the Home Office, which denies their right to be queer, whilst being ethnically and religiously diverse. As Puar (2007) observed, the continuous racialisation and sexualisation of non-western queer bodies reignites racist discursive and structural practices that render BME and Muslim queer subjectivities as pervert, deceiving, and terrorist. Thus, participants' public definition practices comprise resistance acts, as the claim 'I am queer' is read synonymously with the claims 'I am not a pervert', 'I can be Black/Brown and queer', and 'I can be religious and queer'.

Nevertheless, this research sides with Kahn and Alessi (2017), highlighting the agonising experience of opening up, fraught with risks and the fear of continued abuse by the state and public. Agony can be understood here as an embodied act to resist the violence of the forceful exposure of one's sexuality, as framed within the context of interrogating practices, implicated in the asylum process. According to participants' stories, being part of the collective is the only context that affords agency and reassurance through which 'coming out' becomes possible.

Attending to the language appropriated by participants to scaffold an understanding of their sexuality is interesting in the context of the public outing. Participants' sexual

stories are framed within dominant western categorical distinctions (lesbian, gay), which, despite the privileging of emotional properties – being gay is interpreted as loving, in the romantic sense, a member of the same sex – largely echo western definitional assumptions. This contrasts research highlighting the appropriation of colourful language and non-identity talk by African people in constructing ever-shifting queer sexualities (NEST Collective, 2015). This can be understood by the exorbitant amounts of pressure born by asylee populations to express their sexuality in ways that uphold western, middle-class, and largely gay male assumptions, including a categorical, essentialist, and fixed view (as in Akin, 2016, and Dhoest, 2018). Furthermore, participants' narration suggests that given the lack of affirmative contexts, an initial exploration of their sexuality happens through dialogically connecting with global collective LGBT movements. In other words, the global stories available, for queer forced migrant populations, to make sense of their experiences, convey western ideals, which in turn are constitutive of people's sexual identity talk.

Nevertheless, participants' narratives are formed within ever-shifting geopolitical, temporal, and social contexts; thus, undermining normative readings of queer life (e.g. essentialist discourse, consistency, openly engaging with same-sex relationships from a young age), suggesting that queer existences are performed and lived differently in hostile contexts. Moreover, the narrativisation of queer subjectivities constructs (in)cohesive identities in transit – referred to here as 'trans-identities' – that resist narrow, nationalist, homonormative, heteronormative, and patriarchal assumptions. Trans-identities are constantly being re-configured, as new geographies and (cultural) contexts offer novel opportunities for existing. Thus, findings here support a post-modern grammar of queer sexualities, which place them upon fluid intersecting continua (Barker, 2019).

Participants story LGBT sexualities and queer resistances as inseparable to their valued BME backgrounds; thus, reclaiming racial abuse, whilst challenging global narratives confining queer voices only within their White margins. Puar (2007) stresses that such exclusionary narratives result in reinforcing BME sexualities as forged and terrorist-like. As Ombagi (2019) suggests, participants' queer stories can be understood here as a form of reclaiming nationhood, challenging regional narratives that constitute queer folk as non-African or non-Asian and the reverse.

The integration of national and queer identities is a site of strength for participants in this study, upon which hope, courage, and survival skills are shaped and exercised.

Another context that shapes resistance pathways is that of religion. Participants seem to resist religious violence as perpetrated by state, religious, and other public actors through storying a personal relationship with God. This relationship is structured in affirmative ways and, as such, it nurtures self-acceptance and positive survival trajectories. Borrowing from Oliver's analysis (2002), we can hypothesise that God is constructed here as the accepting Other, which, substituting rejecting familial and societal contexts, automatically offers permission to exist. This research extends Alessi's (2016) findings regarding the positive association between spirituality and wellbeing, by highlighting the mechanisms that underpin this relationship, alongside how this population negotiates seemingly incompatible group memberships; thus, as in Ombagi (2019), dismantling heteronormative pre-conceptions of religion as a 'straight' space for pro-creation, alongside homonormative ideals that associate queerness with atheism.

Through story-telling, participants source and transform cultural ideas of survivorhood and community building (i.e. hope, kindness, acceptance, not giving up), to form the foundations of ongoing personal and collective resistances. In so doing, their narration re-drafts rigid conceptualisations of countries of origin as 'all bad'. This is in contrast with the commonly held expectations of denouncing one's cultural heritage in substantiating their asylum claim (Murray, 2014). Here, I am not trying to deny people's experiences of suffering. On the contrary, I aim to highlight one's polyphonic story about one's background and the cultural, historical, and communal dynamics that piece together acts of overcoming one's agony. Enquiring about people's idiosyncratic relationships with their personal, cultural, and collective heritages may prove helpful in maintaining strength and a sense of continuity.

As already described, collective spaces are constituted as grounds whereby re-configurations, of how and what it means to be a BME refugee/asylee queer person, take place through dialogical means. Acts of togetherness are a priori acts of resistance, as they defy socio-politico-cultural processes (both in countries of origin and the UK), which deny any form of collective identification, alongside public

gatherings for BME queer refugee people (Bhagat, 2018; Woolley, 2014). Interestingly, collective support becomes meaningful in the context of articulated collective subjectivities, originating from participants' cultural backgrounds. Put differently, Dom's 'one heart' and Kaba's 'one people' stories can be conceptualised as universal messages of equality, deeply rooted in collectivist cultural legacies and BME/LGBT activism. The salience of collective identities, as culturally-valued forms of being in non-western contexts, is a consistent theme in literature (Hofstede, 2003; Willis, 2012). Therefore, participants' intersectional memberships are invariably implicated in acts of resisting. In the next section, I draw on from wider literature to explore how power operates through those intersections and across contexts to formulate narratives of suffering and resistance.

### **5.3. Systems of Power**

The analysis below reflects both Marxist and Foucauldian operations of power in any given ecology, through structural (restricting access to capital) and discursive (constraining one's access to knowledge and culture production) means respectively.

#### **5.3.1. Pre-flight Lived Experience**

To better understand sexuality-based border crossings, I borrow from Manalansan's (2006) inspection of queer forced migration in a grid of oppression and possibility. Findings here suggest that participants' (early) life experiences are marked by an inability to carve out safe spaces to exist, reflecting complex geographies of abuse, marginalisation, and neglect: Kelvin's concealment and living a lie; Dom's being physically and emotionally abused; Stella's physical, emotional, and sexual abuse by her husband and witnessing of her partner's torture; Kaba's and Bobby's experiences of demonisation. These mirror multiple experiences of oppression articulated elsewhere (Miles, 2010), suggesting, as in Alessi and colleagues (2016), that queer people continue to be under siege in large parts of the world, with family, friends, religious, and state actors being the main perpetrators of violence.

Participants' accounts suggest that suffering is constructed as isomorphic to loss of freedom and the right to exist as equal intersectional beings. Threatening contexts valorise the foregrounding of subjectivities that comply with heteronormative cultural

values (as in Fisher, 2003), to the expense of performing all aspects of selfhood. Ombagi (2019) wonders how the loss of the 'not known' (queer folk have not enjoyed such freedoms recently in those contexts) is experienced and how such experiences can be transformative for agentic action. The rendition of personal narratives as autobiographical accounts of re-invention is relevant here (Gorman-Murray, 2007). That is, that participants construct the lost object (freedom) through their narration, which is also in contact with other global narrations (LGBT rights movement), transforming passive accounts of vulnerability to agentic forms of self-discovery and longing. Thus, loss becomes an embodied experience bound by narrative means.

The above warrant an observation of how power is operating in such oppressive contexts, with punishment and exclusion being the most prominent control tools in participants' speech. There is evidence of both what Foucault (1995) referred to as traditional and modern functions of power. According to the former, the body is rendered as the site of law enforcement through public punishment. One can draw parallels with queer sexuality, being constructed, in some BME contexts, as an unnatural bodily condition in need of rectification (Ekine, 2013), also through mechanisms of torture (Stella's story). A more complex process of hierarchical surveillance is also cited, whereby familial, societal, cultural, and state agents are all disciplinary constituents of upholding valued mores (modern operationalisation of power). Surveillance happens here through structural (i.e. restricting access to public sphere [Dom]) and cultural (i.e. obstructing the making sense of experiences [all]) means; so much so, that deprive queer people from creating public knowledge about their multi-layered selfhoods. The workings of power should also be read horizontally. As Fox (2019) and Ekine (2013) underline, the oppression of indigenous sexualities under the heteronormative moral code of the colonisers has been transformed, in the post-colonial zeitgeist, as a site whereby nationhood and naturalisation practices are executed against western cultural imperialism.

### 5.3.2. Asylum and Refugee Contexts

Data here indicate that LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people's journeys into exile are complex, diverse, and heavily impacted on by their various social positionings. For some, fleeing is an attempt to increase their power and freedom (Dom and Kelvin), for others, (Stella), exile is a by-product of loss of power

(concealing strategies stop being effective). There is also a degree of variance concerning sources of persecution, with abuse by family members being more salient than societal and/or state persecution in some narratives. These point to the need for a more nuanced and idiosyncratic understanding of persecution, which ultimately, as Odlum (2019) notes, demands the adoption of a mixed migration locus of theorising in contrast with more dichotomous lenses. That is, that to better understand queer crossings we need to depart from forced versus voluntary migration binaries and adopt a multi-layered exploration of intersecting factors.

Nevertheless, a common feature amongst crossings is fear, with findings here replicating Berg and Millbank's (2009) observations regarding continuing concealment strategies being a means of protection against perceived exposure threat; thus, challenging binary expectations of freedom and coming out, as implicated in the asylum determination process. This points towards understanding queer mobilities as both a process (moving) and a state (being) (Bakewell, 2011), as most asylum-seeking people continue to feel threatened in exile. This thesis adds to the literature suggesting that queer mobilities also parallel a re-invention process. Through exposure to novel contexts of being (i.e. not being morally ostracised; forming connections with the LGBT refugee community), BME LGBT forced migrant populations engage in knowledge production and novel forms of authoring their stories. Therefore, queer mobilities may constitute spaces for re-scripting discursive forms of oppression (Winton, 2019).

However, BME queer people in exile are subject to complex geo-political forces that legitimise a hierarchical enforcement of power, minimising survival opportunities (Shakhsari, 2014). Findings here mirror literature that stress that, given the inconsistencies in the application of international asylum law (Begazo, 2019), the onus of proof continues to burden claimants (Heller, 2009). Moreover, findings echo Bhagat's (2018) conclusions regarding the imposition of restrictions to accessing opportunities, such as employment, devised by the convergence of refugeeeness, racism, homonormativity, neoliberalism, and homonationalism. Puar (2007) notes that homonationalism has given birth to a new form of White supremacy, which includes acceptance of homosexuality, as long as it is articulated within valued national norms regarding race, class, gender, religion.



The imprint of power here is, therefore, complex and much more pervasive, as it reflects inequalities grounded upon people's multiple social positions and not just their sexuality or gender. Queer bodies can get deported, carved out of (discursive) space, disbelieved, treated as terrorist, degraded, reduced to good or bad migrant dichotomies, and deprived of their voice. The temporality of rights and safety in exile (as in Winton, 2019), becomes clear in Kelvin's story-telling, which invites us to reflect on when/if people (ever) stop being treated as refugees.

### 5.3.3. Talking Resistance

Language performs a pivotal role in remembering and reconciling histories of oppression, struggle, and marginalisation (hooks, 1990). But this is not just an emotional process of capturing what needs not to be forgotten. On the contrary, it offers a context of imaginative opportunity. That is, through story-telling participants engage in transforming the past, present, whilst negotiating dreams and plans for action, such as educating others, strengthening community connections, challenging their misrepresentation by mainstream cultural agents. Through building alliances, their narration reshapes personal struggle into a political quest for equality.

According to hooks (2000), oppressed people occupy a place of marginality, which offers opportunities for envisaging a new world order, as they negotiate crossings between margins and centre. Similarly, Ombagi (2019) talks about the power of queer Black people's narratives to challenge vestiges of western epistemological colonialism (i.e. immutability) and construct new meanings from an 'in-between' position. These resonate with findings, here, suggesting that participants' resistance is formed from a place of marginality or in-between, both in terms of geo-political (in-between countries) and cultural references, as their voices get shut down, distorted, and undermined. Nevertheless, from a position of exclusion they construct a new equal world, based on universality and love. The message is clear: love is one and we are all humans.

## **5.4. Belonging**

Despite its relevance, there is a dearth of psychological literature concerning belonging. Briggs proposes a relational definition regarding belonging as an “experience of feeling accepted, needed, and valued” (2015:6). This is also reflected in participants’ narratives, as positive connections with others are constitutive of a ‘self’ that is embraced and appreciated. This study proposes that belonging is also a collective experience, arrived at through language. Through dialogical transactions, the collective reshapes marginality, re-defining experiences of being, alongside home and safety (Denborough, 2008,2018). Scaffolding a shared space, participants create what Erikson framed as “emotional shelter” (1976:240), so much so that it is through the collective that individual existences take shape and the world is re-imagined as safe. Therefore, it is through collective narration that safety and home are constructed, and, as in Fobear (2016), it is through the body that they are experienced.

Experiences of home and belonging are incohesive, fragmented, and context-dependent (hooks, 1990). We can say that BME LGBT refugee and asylee people’s existences occupy a liminal space (Van Gennep, 1960), in a sense that they do not fully belong in the system they flee from, yet neither in the one they seek refuge, whereby racist, homophobic, and neoliberal discourses and practices push this population to the periphery. However, hooks (1990) reminds us that liminal space is not only a place of suffering but also a place of resistance, renewal, and imagination. As contextual realities shift, so do experiences of belonging, safety, and acceptance, with collective resistance spaces offering a dynamic refuge from othering and the annihilation of BME LGBT forced migrant people’s ever-becoming trans-identities.

## **5.5. Critical Review**

### **5.5.1. Limitations**

A number of methodological reservations apply. The small number of people that took part in the study (five in total, four individual narratives), meant that opportunities to report on the breadth and variability of issues explored in this text were constrained. Nevertheless, inviting a small number of voices was felt to be an

appropriate strategy for delving into the nuances and polyphonic readings of complex and otherwise unheard stories, whilst meeting the logistical restrictions pertaining the timely completion of the thesis.

Moreover, the recruitment strategy employed, restricted participant involvement to London. It is acknowledged that populations outside the capital may have reduced access to collective support due to the shortage of relevant organisations in suburban areas (Keene & Greatrick, 2017), which may interfere with adopted resistance pathways. Additionally, recruitment was solely sought through a single charity and the process of identifying suitable participants was orchestrated by its coordinator, meaning that biases in the process may have been present. An effort was made, however, to include participants from different cultural, ethnic, sexual, and gender backgrounds to preserve richness and diversity.

The nicheness of the area examined, has precluded any wider recruitment strategies in the given timeframes. Nevertheless, it is worth considering how random sampling procedures may have impacted on conclusions made. For example, I wonder how people, who are not part of any organisation and people who do not speak English, might differ in terms of constructing their refugeeeness, suffering, and overcoming experiences, alongside their intersecting identities. This might be particularly relevant given this study's emphasis on participants' language appropriations and contextualisation of their narratives.

The above may trigger concerns regarding participants' representativeness and transferability of conclusions. The epistemological foundation of this research operates from the axiom that no method of inquiry can support the excavation of generalisable 'truths' that exist irrespective of context and values (Gergen, 1999). Findings here are reflective of participants' intersecting contexts and are limited by them. This also applies to the metaphor used, as it was co-constructed in a bottom-up approach and, thus, circumscribed by local interests, preferences, and dialogical dynamics. Nevertheless, participants are part of a wider community with resembling characteristics (Stake, 2005). Therefore, although this research cannot claim universal applicability of its findings, it has concerned itself with the articulation of "working hypotheses" about wider issues and ways of therapeutically engaging with

these, to be tested and refined through continued contextual contact with the population of interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1986:75). In accordance with Lincoln's and Guba's (1986) recommendations, this text has provided an adequate description of contextual aspects that might affect conclusions drawn to aid readers' inferences regarding the transferability of findings in other contexts.

It is worth acknowledging however, that any attempts to share the cartography of participant's personal, ethnic, and cultural characteristics was balanced by ethical considerations regarding anonymity, especially for participants whose determination of status was underway at the time. This might have undermined the depth of the intersectional analysis, forging unrealistic notions of universality in experiences and othering (e.g. *all* African/Asian/Christian/Muslim queer forcibly displaced people centre strength in faith stories). Another limitation concerns the inability to capture refugee and asylee transgender and bisexual people's voices, despite the broad inclusion criteria applied. Given the additional difficulties in establishing credibility and the rejection that bisexual and transgender people face also by their LGBT community (Rehaag, 2008; Romero & Huerta, 2019), it is appropriate to assume that their storied subjectivities and survival trajectories might differ.

The retention of the LGBT acronym throughout this thesis was in accordance with the culture and language of the charity and its members, the recruitment strategy, and UEL registration<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, I have provided the reader with clarity in terms of its use as an umbrella term and have attended to intragroup differences where appropriate to minimise conflation bias. It is acknowledged that similar ambiguities concerning terminology are present in published literature, perhaps being indicative of the complexities concerning the bridging between LGBT scholarship, epistemology, and varied self-identification preferences.

To review the study's credibility, I concentrated on issues concerning the transparency, comprehensiveness, and coherence of the analytic approach (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993). Specifically, I provided a transparent account of the analytic axes that were followed, with a more detailed

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<sup>5</sup> Thesis was registered with the 'LGBT' on the title.

account provided in Appendix J, based on a transcript excerpt. To do justice to participants' narration and avoid biases, I reported on a polyphonic reading, trying to seek multiple perspectives and nuances in the reification of narrativised subjectivities. Furthermore, the PAR ethos of the research afforded opportunities to ensure that participants' authorship of their stories was preserved throughout.

Watkins and Schulman (2008) suggest that PAR quality should be assessed against two continua: the level of participation and the level of disruption that is effected on the systems of oppression. They note that these continua should act as an aspiration, as only few projects will achieve high ratings on both scales. Given the thesis-related logistical constraints, the aspired level of change concerned the raising of collective awareness regarding aspects of oppression, the challenging of some of the dominant reductionist discourses that permeate BME LGBT forced migrant people's lives, and the bottom-up empowerment of participants to reclaim their storied subjectivities. Fobear (2017) suggests that discursive transformations constitute political actions, as developing critical consciousness comprises an integral part of inducing structural changes (Freire, 1972).

As far as the level of participation is concerned, participants were involved in co-constructing the focus of the study and metaphor used, commented on the levels of analyses appropriated, and reflected upon the direction of the analytic process and key messages they wished to communicate. Nevertheless, participation in analysis was compromised by unforeseen circumstances of confinement and structural barriers concerning participants' location and limited financial capacity to travel. It is the intention of all parties to continue having collective conversations with the wider community based on the emerging stories.

The continuous sharing of stories resonates well with collective narrative methodologies. Stories are in constant interaction with the audience/s that receive/s them (Eastmond, 2007), and by the very act of receiving, narratives are transformed, whilst transforming consciences, realities and practices (Denborough, 2008; White & Epston, 1990). As part of creating sustainable change, participants unanimously expressed their wish to share their narratives with the rest of their community using the 'Passport of Life' and photographic documentation to thicken emerging stories.

Their shared dream was to support a more public 'definitional ceremony' (see White, 2007) and awareness, through social media action and podcasting. I see this as a multi-level and dynamic process, the documentation of which transcends the aims and constraints of the present study.

### 5.5.2. Reflexivity

Narrative analysis pays close attention to the interspace between participants and the researcher, as another context to be navigated, whose imprint is evident on the types of stories that can emerge and not (Squire et al., 2014). Notwithstanding the influence that my presence had had on what was spoken about, my intersectional subjectivities have played a fundamental part in my interpretation of the results.

Attempting to unravel my multiple positions, I relied on curiosity and a relationally reflexive stance (Burnham, 2005), aiming at bringing assumptions at the forefront of my thinking (Coyle, 1996). This allowed me critically exploring othering practices, which may have unwittingly dictated my writings (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996).

#### *(1) Relational reflexivity*

During this project I have become more aware of the power that I hold. As a white cisgender male in a heterosexual relationship interacting with BME LGBT people, whose right to live a free life in the UK is constantly questioned, I kept wondering throughout this project about how I was perceived by participants, particularly in reference to two dominant narratives: the western as saviour and as oppressor. I wonder whether my embodied presence in the receiving end of the story-telling created conditions which resembled asylum-seeking interviews. I, therefore, became particularly interested in the function of the narratives within our interspace (Eastmond, 2007), wondering whether participants' story-telling echoed their agony, amongst others, to be believed, to be read as worthy, to be emancipated from oppression, and how these might have differed if narratives were received by alternative audiences.

In response to these, we used the 'Passport of Life' as a means to centring participants' skills, knowledge, and authorship, whilst de-centring mine, hoping to enable more level and diffuse power interactions. Engaging with the community on a

relational level, together crafting a research project that reflected their needs, and encouraging involvement, constituted additional actions taken to the above cause. In re-evaluating my practice, I wonder whether sharing my own 'Passport of Life' would have better served my purpose in 'being with' the community. The decision not to, was underpinned by my not wanting to dilute participants' central position to this research and surely reflects the scientific conventions that dictated to some extent the execution of this project. The latter was an inescapable part of my engagement with participants, which I found helpful to own and be transparent about.

## *(2) Self-reflexivity*

One of the ideas that informed my treating of participants' stories was that narratives are constructed and received in dialogical exchanges and, thus, are never fixed or finalised, but rather always shifting (Frank, 2012). One can see such influences in the concept of trans-identities, which I feel adequately represents the movement (literal and figurative) of participants' subjectivities. The idea of fluidity and (in)cohesiveness of storied identities resonates with my multi-layered experiences of selfhood, being differentially shaped through personal border crossings.

My experience as a European national living in Brexit Britain had provided a platform to engage with the uncertainty that refugee and asylee people withstand and respond to, regarding their rights. It sharpened my awareness of the political nature of border crossings and the temporality of (our) rights, allowing my distancing from individualistic notions of suffering and connecting with its political basis.

Nevertheless, our distinct migration pathways and my intersectional identities and respective power that they afford me, meant that participants and I had differential exposure to experiences of suffering and marginality. This translated into my having to question and let go of fantasies of closeness, which I understood as stemming from my initial need to feel able to comprehend participants' experiences and almost legitimise my embarking on this thesis, so as to really observe my biases and assumptions. For instance, being part of a homonationalist society, I had to interrogate my practice, to safeguard against disproportionately locating suffering in the context of participants' countries of origin. Additionally, to preserve the duality of insights into participants' storying of their queerness (i.e. participants' appropriation

of identity talk whilst simultaneously scaffolding ever-becoming subjectivities), I had to be careful not to impose my own dissatisfaction with sexuality and gender labels, stemming from my experience concerning the ways that my sexuality and gender were misread in my early life under the gaze of a hegemonic masculine culture (Courtenay, 2000).

Furthermore, my class privilege, inextricably linked to my professional career, and white racial background, might have obstructed my appreciating this population's structural difficulties, whilst inadequately theorising predicaments on their racial basis. One of my blind spots concerned my inability to foresee the challenges that participants faced in attending the workshops and engaging with analytic conversations. Not pushing enough for being granted funds to support participants with this quest was one of the inadvertent ways that I reinforced the structural inequalities present, which I regret.

### *(3) Positioning*

Given the differing trajectories between participants and myself, the position from which I felt comfortable to operate was that of being an outside witness (White, 2007). Here, I will briefly recall the things that I have learnt from and about participants to invite the reader to engage in a re-humanising conversation. First, I have been struck by participants' inclusive talk. I have conversed with people whose stories constructed opportunities for equality and justice for every human being, irrespective of (in)visible differences. I have engaged with people who are proud of what they believe in and who they are (becoming). I have witnessed participants' bravery, collective struggles and strengths, and dynamic nature of their resistances. I have become humbled by their battles and quests for freedom. I have seen people who are talented, skilled, bright, eager to contribute. People who dream and create home and belonging despite hurdles and structural inequalities. I have engaged with people who are sons, daughters, mothers, brothers, sisters, partners, friends, citizens. I have become saddened by stories of suffering. I have felt angry by the politicisation of human flow and by practices, which push this population to the margins. Finally, I have felt encouraged and hopeful by participants' collective



responses, their togetherness, and their ability to be with one another, whilst tolerating huge levels of uncertainty, distress, and fear.

## **5.6. Recommendations**

This study's findings taken together with the international literature suggest several key implications for theory, practice, and policy development concerning BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people. My main objective here is to address the stated overarching aim of this thesis, concerning the articulation of key recommendations to support ethical practice. The themes presented below are organised in accordance with the key axioms reflected in participants' story-telling, which concern the maximisation of opportunities to author their stories and promote equality and rights.

### **5.6.1. Rethinking Therapy**

Much of the therapeutic discourse concerning this population reflects common Western understandings of post-trauma re-organisation and is usually based on a complex PTSD approach (Alessi & Kahn, 2017). Although this approach may prove useful in comprehending the continual basis of LGBT refugee trauma (see multiple experiences of abuse in early life [Alessi et al., 2016]), is limited by its narrow transcultural applicability and its privileging of individual pathology, as it directs attention away from the socio-political context of distress (Summerfield, 2002). Therapeutic interventions that echo the complex PTSD conceptualisation usually rest upon three broad treatment phases: ensure safety; alleviate suffering through dealing with the traumatic material; and promote quality of living (Herman, 1992). Whilst these might be of great value to this population, here I argue that the '*how*' should be as central as the '*what*' (Freire, 1972; Martín-Baró, 1994).

This research shows that individualised notions of trauma might be unfit for purpose, as they neglect the community-level impact of suffering for BME LGBT forced migrant people (social agony). That is, that safety here is conceptualised in systemic ways, meaning that stabilisation must be redefined in collective/community terms. For example, this research has shown that collective formations constitute discursive spaces for acceptance and self-discovery, or what Plummer defines as "re-birthing experience" (1995:52), suggesting that fostering collective support may promote

healing for the community as a whole. This is especially important as aforementioned barriers might constrain the articulation of individualised referrals to NHS services (Pollock et al., 2012). Furthermore, stabilisation/safety should be expanded away from symptom-focused and reductionist psycho-education notions of intervening, to incorporate information sharing regarding the rights of this population in the UK and possible legal pathways to ensuring safety and freedom. Thus, liaison with relevant charities and legal aid organisations is imperative. In this quest, clinical psychologists should be guided by relevant BPS guidelines (2018b) and a participatory ethos, so that the focus of the intervention is guided by and closely mirrors BME LGBT forced migrant people's wishes.

Working with trauma can be a challenge with this population. Opening up about extremely painful experiences with a stranger in a one-to-one fashion may hold little cultural relevance and could be re-traumatising. Additionally, findings here suggest that suffering, grounded upon people's intersectional subjectivities, continues to be a present embodied experience in exile (Alessi et al., 2018), reflecting ongoing inequalities (Raboin, 2017). These point to the need for interventions that are culturally relevant, collective (as above), and targeting change not just on the individual, but also social and political levels (Nelson & Prilleltenski, 2010).

This study favoured the use of collective narrative approaches in supporting BME LGBT forcibly displaced people's healing. Story-telling was a safe and acceptable approach to making sense of the multitude of disadvantages faced by this collective, alongside accounts of overcoming and resistance, both being simultaneously present in participants' talk (Alessi, 2016). The purposeful centralisation of people's voices in these approaches is conducive to diffusing power dynamics between clients and therapists, placing healing away from pathologising discourses and in communities' own resources. Collective story-telling can also be a preliminary step to collective action, through reflecting on shared struggles, geo-politico-social and historical power inequalities (Holland, 1992), inviting the re-authoring of narratives in ways that contribute to advocacy initiatives (Fobear, 2015). Liberation and community psychology principles are relevant, as they encourage a rethinking of therapists' stance, as facilitators and witnesses of bottom-up empowering processes, whilst encouraging a bridge between psychotherapeutic discourse, collective

organisation, and activism, to ensure that change is effected on the very systems of oppression (Smail, 2005; Watkins & Schulman, 2008).

We should also practice affirmatively (Alessi, Dillon, & Kim, 2015), valuing people's idiosyncratic and cultural understandings of their sexuality and gender. In so doing, therapists should empower people to embrace or reject identity descriptors in accordance with their personal and contextual experience (Camminga, 2018). The 'Passport of Life' could be a valuable tool in this, as it encourages the authoring of subjectivities in ways that are in sync with meaningful reference points.

Nevertheless, caution should be exercised when applying metaphors to contexts other than those from which they were born. Therapists should also consider the complexities in involving interpreters where appropriate, especially in relation to present homophobic attitudes, and ensure that appropriate pathways are considered to establish safety amongst all parties (BPS, 2008).

Finally, interventions should encompass a concerted effort to facilitate integration and growth. This should entail supporting BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people to secure high-quality housing and employment opportunities and to have access to healthcare and education, also through forming connections with statutory and non-statutory services (Ager & Strang, 2008). This study highlights that integration is a contextual process of becoming, which involves discursive organisation of subjectivities that are always in flux. Therapists should facilitate agentic action amongst BME LGBT forced migrant people in piecing together (or not) their multiple aspects of selfhood, also in relation to their exposure to the new cultural context of the country of refuge. The above place psychology firmly in the community, encouraging creative outreach engagement, or 'working from the margins', to effect ethical and sustainable change (Holmes, 2010).

Research findings can translate into a number of recommendations to ensure meaningful engagement with this community. First, it has been shown that validating, enriching, and witnessing stories of resistance can be a helpful approach to facilitating healing and agentic involvement. It is acknowledged that the concept may be alienating to clinicians and researchers to whom constructionist and community psychology frameworks are foreign. It is also acknowledged that resistance has been

predominantly conceptualised in clinical psychology as an untoward response to treatment, suggesting disengagement and/or an unwillingness to explore painful experiences or relinquishing non-constructive behaviours. This thesis recommends the reclaiming of the term resistance – reflecting similar reclaiming processes instigated by participants in the authoring of their identities – as a location whereby responses to abuses and oppression can be validated and promoted as a means towards regaining agency. Resistance here is seen as an active way of *responding* to wrongdoing, to be celebrated and embraced. Thus, this research advocates for a more nuanced understanding of *resisting*, which should trigger a curious exploration of how affected people and communities respond to injustices that impact on their subjectivities – they always respond – so as to create space for stories of healing to emerge alongside stories of predicament. Questions that might be relevant to ask here are: *How did you respond to this? What did you do? What helped you to survive this? What does that say about you? Who else knows this about you?*

This research has also pointed out the importance of weaving stories of overcoming with one's rich cultural, ethnic, religious, and ancestral backgrounds, alongside global movements (LGBT, Black Lives Matter, and other relevant liberation movements), so as to create a sense of continuity and support people and communities to (re)engage with relevant global, local, and historic resources and expertise. This would necessitate a curious professional stance so that such links can be safely explored. It is also recommended that such discussions happen in collective spaces to aid hope and a sense of belonging. This might range from group therapy settings, facilitating work with (non-governmental) community and/or religious organisations, and supporting online forums and other forms of connecting and community engagement.

Perhaps most importantly, clinicians, researchers, and services should act, as this research advocates, as the accepting 'Other', so as to promote trust, safety, and ultimately healing. This would entail establishing a climate of respect, openness, and moral engagement. That is, *sharing our psyche*<sup>6</sup> with affected people and communities: opening up; being with; openly naming the systemic injustices that they

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<sup>6</sup> Used here based on its Greek etymology meaning soul, life, breath.

have and continue to suffer; not being afraid to take sides and denounce oppressive practices by the Home Office, states, and the public, which continue to dehumanise and push this community to the margins; be mindful of and challenge our own assumptions of normality and compatible identities; reinforce that people have a right to be equal and free irrespective of how they experience and live their selfhoods; and be accepting of those personhoods.

#### 5.6.2. Rethinking Research

Future researchers may wish to explore resistance pathways in bisexual and transgender people given their differing contexts. They may also wish to further explore the utility of 'trans-identity' as a concept for theorising ever-shifting experiences of selfhood. Further research is also needed to understand BME LGBT forced migrant people's reification of sexuality and gender identities, particularly in a matrix of homonationalist and homonormative pressures anchored in western asylum-seeking procedures. In doing so, larger N studies may be needed to fine-grain differences between people that are in the asylum system and people who are not (see Dhoest, 2018). However, as Patel (2003) notes, it is important that research questions are framed on human rights ethical grounds, as researching difference may result in stigmatising, blaming, and othering discourses. Rather, any attempts to understand people's multitude of sexuality and gender talk should be firmly located in the assumption that new contexts provide new re-scripting opportunities, even if these are shaped by oppressive practices. Thus, the onus of explanation/interpretation should rest with the contextual procedures that account for such differences and not people themselves, whose attempts to making sense of their sexuality should be understood, as this text intimates, as resistance responses.

It might be helpful that future research explores how services can collaborate with charitable organisations to form healing networks for BME LGBT refugee and asylee communities. It would also be useful to evaluate the impact of collective narrative and PAR interventions on this population's wellbeing. The use of creative and narrative evaluation strategies, such as the 'Most Significant Change' technique (Davies & Dart, 2005), might aid a more naturalistic observation of change. Other research aims may include collating valued outcomes to inform public health and advocacy strategies to minimise the effects of oppression and investigating ways of

forming collective spaces of healing outside metropolitan centres where resources might be scarce. All research with this population should embody participatory principles to enable people's voices to be heard, through re-scripting power configurations.

### 5.6.3. Rethinking Participation

This research has demonstrated the pivotal role of participation in enabling healing, bottom-up empowerment, and capturing the opportunities and creative insights that are born out of a marginalised positioning. Here, I will articulate the reflexive process that shaped how learnings were co-produced, so as to invite other researchers and clinicians to develop similar understandings in their own contexts. The participatory ethos that permeates the findings has been scaffolded upon three complimentary reflexive processes. One concerned being mindful of my own contexts, both personal and professional, and their impact on the co-construction of findings. Through this, I have become aware of the several ([in]compatible) positionings that I occupied. For example, as a White cisgender man in a heterosexual relationship I felt that I was approaching the study from an 'outsider's' positioning, pre-empting a more distanced engagement. Being a migrant person who endorses a more fluid understanding of sexuality and gender afforded a positioning as an ally to my participants' cause, being morally involved and empathically affected by their cause. Additionally, acting out of my contexts as both a clinician and researcher was constitutive of a power to theorising participants' experiences in order to embrace new understandings. The second reflexive process concerned my engaging with participants, through our dialogical transaction and co-presence, and how this, alongside the differential contexts we were acting out of, has inescapably been implicated in how findings were co-shaped and understood. This process also involved thinking about my values and cultural presence in relation to the values and cultural background of the partnering organisation. The third process concerned reflecting on participants' values, goals, wishes, and their relationship to the organisation and present project, to ensure that these come vividly through findings.

The co-development of learnings was based on creating coherence between these three interconnected strands of reflexivity. That is, that I strived to create a coherent account between the organisation values; participants' contexts, values, and wishes

(as expressed in reflective spaces held prior and post data collection, described elsewhere in this thesis, and through their stories); participants' storied subjectivities (crystallised in transcripts and in their 'Passports'); and my personal-professional, methodological, and conceptual references and positionings – which I saw as a means to serving valued ends. That is, doing justice to our partnership and the nuances of participants' experiences. In so doing, I wondered about what frameworks I could draw upon (power of my knowledge and training) to highlight and make sense of participants' multi-faceted stories (power of their knowledge and lived experience). An example of the dynamic process of creating coherence is how resistance was theorised in this research. I appropriated the concept – an example of drawing on from my professional and academic backgrounds – to organise stories of responding to abuse as they were articulated by participants in their narratives, whilst attending to their cause for creating agency and collective empowerment. The concept also served the philosophy and cultural references of the organisation, as it mapped onto its efforts to actively challenge the injustices that affect the community, whilst also mirroring my personal-professional reflections regarding the constraining and dehumanising effects of the monolithic construction of people's identities (eg. constructing the margins as a site of passivity and victimisation).

Although I appreciate that different contexts may provide different challenges and opportunities for engaging in the co-production of knowledge, this project has taught me that continuously trying to create spaces for reflection – I documented elsewhere in the thesis what pre and post data collection reflective discussions were held – and the integration of our personal and professional contexts under a 'witnessing' approach to engagement with the data, are helpful in co-creating valued and innovative learnings, whilst ethically positioning ourselves towards marginalised communities. I have also experienced being open and transparent about my contexts and what I can bring that might be helpful (or not) to participants' and the community's aspirations as helpful in constructing trust and safety, which also permitted my being curious about my own biases and assumptions. One example, here, is participants' and my differential engagement with stories of faith and religion. Questions I found helpful asking whilst developing the shared learning points presented in this text were: *What am I bringing here? What are participants bringing? What aspects of my personal-professional identities and ways of*

*theorising map onto participants' and community's values? Which aspects of participants' selfhood is important to be shown and done justice to? How can I position myself alongside this cause? What are my blind-spots and how can I bring them forth to my thinking? How do I position myself alongside participants in ways that feel safe and encourage mutual partnership? How can I check with participants that shared learning points adequately and sufficiently represent their aspirations and multiple subjectivities? How can I attend to the ethos of a partnering relationship, whilst engaging with the opportunities and constraints that come with my role as a researcher and clinician?*

#### 5.6.4. Rethinking Policy

Working with refugee and asylee people should entail challenging some of the wider systems of abuse, including common judicial practices regarding the LGBT subgroup. This research shows that politico-legal pathways for seeking asylum contribute to BME LGBT people's suffering in exile, which often implicates reductionist and racialised understandings of sexuality and gender as a means to judging claimants' credibility. Psychologists should have an active role in collaborating with relevant third sector organisations to produce evidence-based reports to inform humane policies and practices. These should be grounded on research challenging the notion of unilateral cohesiveness of personal narratives in trauma (Brewin, 2016), and highlighting the impact of heightened emotional status on story-telling (Berg & Millbank, 2009). Moreover, as this research highlights, it is important that stereotypical homonormative and heteronormative readings of sexuality and gender, as sanctioned by judicial procedures, are questioned as they fail to map onto the diversity in storying, experiencing, and expressing BME – and I would argue all – sexualities (Barker, 2019; Ekine, 2013). Finally, psychologists, alongside affected communities, should advocate for a departure from emphasising credibility to embracing an idiosyncratic analysis of persecution as a means of granting protection (Rehaag, 2008). Patel (2003) purports that human rights advocacy should be at the heart of any engagement with refugee people, thus deconstructing reductionist notions of what constitutes therapeutic and the remit of clinical psychologists. All policy development should be grounded upon a participatory ethos to ensure representation and collective action.



## 5.7. Dissemination

Findings have been shared as part of a poster presentation for the Centre of Narrative Research annual Postgraduate Research Conference (Papadopoulos, Ssali, & Castro Romero, 2020). I also intend to further communication of the research to the scientific and wider community through peer-reviewed, and open-access journal publications and other conference presentations. Additionally, I will continue collaborating with the community to produce a report and enable the sharing of the stories with wider audiences.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This collective narrative participatory project engaged with a community of BME LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people to join their voices for equality and freedom. Through the co-construction of the metaphor 'Passport of Life, it reviewed stories of resistance in coming together as a collective and reshaping marginalising and othering discourses that colour these people's subjectivities. It also showed how facilitating collective spaces of belonging might be an appropriate approach to promote bottom-up empowerment and foster healing.

It is a shared hope for the stories in this text to continue to travel, to impact, and be impacted upon. In that, responsibility lies with the person at the receiving end of the story-telling, to ethically situate themselves when interpreting the stories (Gready, 2008).

From a position of struggle, resistance, and immense strength, participants in this study reminds us all that refugee stories are human stories. They are stories of longing, loving, and caring, stories of equality, belonging, safety, discovery, and growth. Refugee flow is human flow, constructed upon a universal need:

*FREEDOM.*

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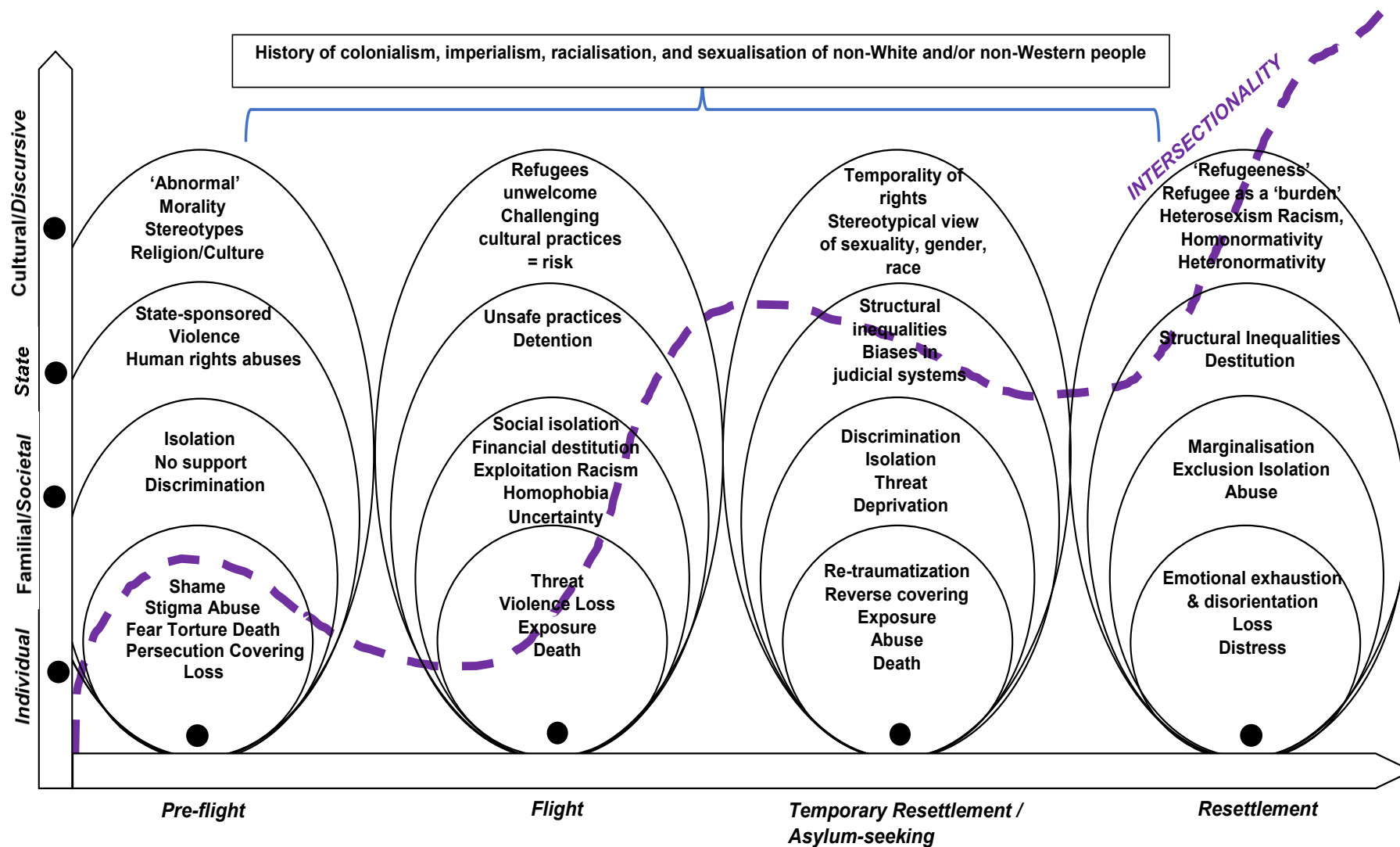
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## **8. APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A – A DIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK OF LGBT REFUGEE/ASYLUM-SEEKING PEOPLE’S PREDICAMENTS





## APPENDIX B – SCOPING REVIEW

### B.1. Guiding Question, Search Terms & Strategy

To explore scholarship on the LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people's experiences of resilience and wellbeing, I conducted a scoping review following guidance provided by Peters and colleagues (2015). A scoping review employs systematic means to mapping out the key literature in a specific area (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). However, unlike systematic reviews or meta-analyses, scoping review is not often guided by a narrow research question or hypothesis but rather employs a more exploratory focus (Peters et al., 2015). Given the scarcity of research concerning resilience mechanisms in LGBT forcibly displaced people, I felt that an exploratory lens would better serve the purposes of the review.

The question that guided my literature search was:

- *What can published literature tell us about issues of 'resilience', 'resistance' and 'wellbeing' in LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people?*

As the topic falls within both psychological and social science fields, a range of sources were selected: PsychInfo, CINAHL, Academic Search Complete. I conducted an initial search on 15/10/2018 to help support my thesis proposal. At the time, I searched key papers to get accustomed with the relevant terms and indexes used to describe the population of interest and the relevant context (wellbeing/resilience). I subsequently conducted a more comprehensive search on 31/10/19, the outcomes of which are presented below (B.2.). To capture the breadth of the topic I used the following search terms:

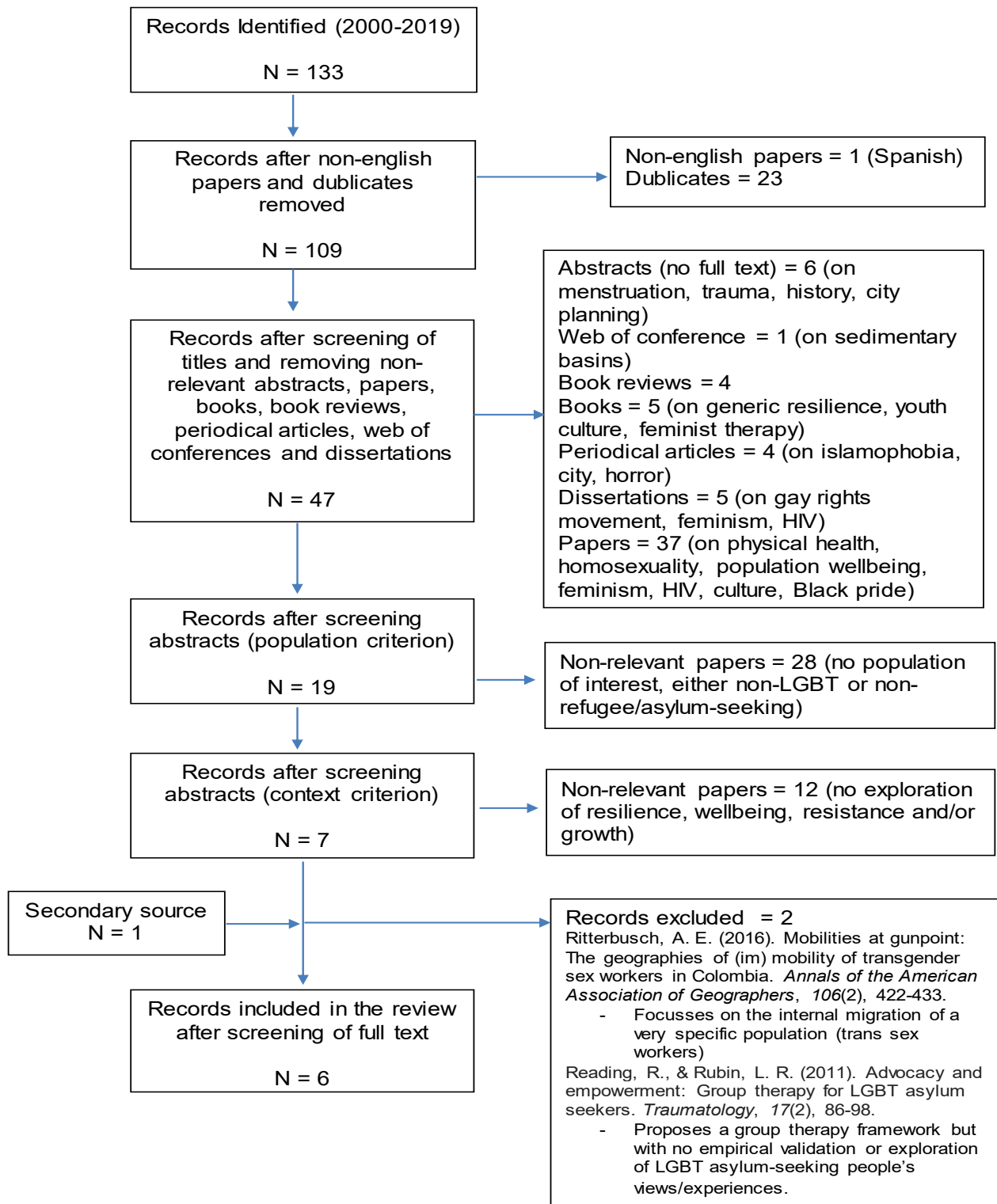
- ("LGBT\*" OR "Gay" OR "Homosexual\*" OR "lesbian\*" OR "bisexual\*" OR "transsexual\*") AND ("Refugee\*" OR "asylum seek\*" OR "migra\*" OR "exile" OR "forced migra\*") AND ("resilience" OR "wellbeing" OR "growth" OR "resist\*")

Given the specificity of my research topic and the limited literature that has been produced in the field, I felt that applying stringent quality criteria when selecting and

reviewing relevant scholarship would limit the level of insight that could be reported on. I also felt that privileging specific sources of information might have resulted in a scientific form of othering and exclusion. Thus, I have assumed that refugee and asylum-seeking people's voices might be best represented in bottom-up projects or scholarship with high degrees of participation and involvement. Given the adverse and complex circumstances that these projects are shaped in, they may not always abide by or report on methodological scrutiny. Therefore, I chose to be inclusive of grey literature, including reports and testimonies, and studies that have not been conducted with optimal methodological rigour. My search cannot be seen as exhaustive either. Although I have looked at referenced papers and sought secondary sources, I did not do so in a systematic way and therefore my search might have been subject to bias. Nevertheless, I attempted to look at a variety of sources outside of psychology literature which gives me confidence that I have conducted an in-depth and comprehensive search. To ensure transparency and replicability of my literature review I applied the following criteria:

- Inclusion criteria: research reporting on experiences of LGBT refugee and asylum-seeking people; research reporting on experiences of resilience, wellbeing, resistance, and growth; research that has been conducted in English; research that has been conducted between the years 2000 and 2019.
- Exclusion criteria: research reporting on experiences of migrant people, and people who were not forced to flee their homelands to escape persecution, and internally displaced people – assuming that their experiences of oppression and growth would be different from people who had to cross international borders to reach safety; research not focussing on self-identified LGBT people; research not focussing on resilience, wellbeing and/or resistance mechanisms; research that was conducted in any other language but English; research that has been conducted prior to the year 2000.

## B.2. Search Results



## APPENDIX C – REFLEXIVE JOURNAL (EXCERPTS)

### C.1. Pre-research Engagement Phase and Metaphor Development

- Attended one of the Community's meetings. These meetings are open to all community members (and others). I got a sense that meetings are structured around supporting connections amongst attendees, through sharing challenging stories, hurdles, and celebrating successes in relation to getting granted asylum in the UK. The meeting I attended featured a speech from the co-ordinator of the charity who advocated for self-acceptance and the importance of people's making supportive links with one another to overcome the challenges inherent in fighting for their rights. Community members also talked about making sense of and accepting their sexuality, encouraged one another, and discussed the shortcomings of the asylum determination process and how they reinforce power imbalances between the oppressor and the oppressed. A member also spoke about their story and their success in what they framed as their battle to convince the Home Office of the genuineness of their claim.

-I felt that attendees assumed an 'activist' position, trying to empower one another, whilst sharing practical advice and support. I was struck by the atmosphere, which resembled that of being part of a family, and wondered about its function in the context of being away from one's own roots. I also noticed the trust, care, respect, and understanding emanating from community members' discussions.

- My emotional reaction to the stories was that of hope and despair. Despair about the sacrifices that people have made for their freedom and the continuous denial of their subjectivities by the authorities in the UK. Hope in relation to the opportunities that coming together bears for healing, as I witnessed people joining up to overcome, to fight for, to exist, to speak, to share.

- The proceedings in that meeting made me particularly aware of my intersectional identities. I was the only White man in the room and perhaps the only one who was in a heterosexual relationship. That made me feel paralysed, especially in relation to having to introduce myself (at later stages, once the research project commenced) in ways that did not feel alienating for the community. I was particularly worried about being seen as someone who cannot understand people's intersectional struggles and systemic challenges that they face. I found some kind of resolution in my identity as a migrant, alongside the coordinator's speech, whereby he stressed the importance in making alliances with diverse sectors, organisations, and people to maximise opportunities for LGBT refugee and asylee people's voices to be heard and make strong allies in the process. I felt that this positioned me and the research I aspired to do with the community nicely, in that, as a longstanding LGBT ally, I started seeing myself as the conveyor of participants' stories, rather than the author of them.

- In researching for the right methodology to serve this purpose I looked into the tenets of community psychology and liberation practice. I felt that the proceedings that I had witnessed in joining the community's meeting closely resembled the idea of 'critical consciousness' (Freire, 1972). I felt that the voicing of experiences of the multitude of disadvantage that they endured served the purpose of collective organisation and sustenance against oppression. This made me particularly interested in thinking with the community about engaging with a research design and methodology that brings such purpose forth.

- I also kept wondering about power relationships within the community. For example, I was curious about how people responded to the coordinator of the community club and wondered about power constructions in those relational dynamics. What I witnessed was a kind of power framed in positive, empowering, and coaching/guiding ways, which seemed to resonate well with people's expectations and needs. I wondered about the degree of sameness (the coordinator also a Black queer refugee person) and how this was conducive to power dynamics being experienced by community members as less threatening.

- From the beginning of this project, I have felt some tension between a global need to identify in a certain way to achieve certainty and the fundamentally uncertain world we live in. The certain/uncertain dimension was helpful in allowing me to review the ways I see and perform my identities in relation to participants'. From my engagement with the community I understood that, given participants' uncertain political status, their longing for certainty was, amongst others, organised around forming connections, shaped around shared identity descriptors (refugee, LGBT, BME, asylee). This is in contrast to how I see myself, feeling frustrated with labels (national, migration, sexuality etc.), which I regard as reductionist and unfit for purpose. My main concern with these categories amount to the fact that I believe that they arbitrarily reinforce distinctions, norms, and disadvantage, pathologising natural human experiences. I believe that we should be asking the question of how we can ensure equality and freedom for all.
- My understanding of my selfhood transcends traditional readings of national identity and I have grown wary of fixed, categorical, and essentialist notions of gender and sexuality stereotypes. These are very much based on my own experiences of border crossings and idiosyncratic performances of gender. Of course, I regard my calling into question such conventions as stemming from a privileged position, as my intersectional contexts offer some degree of safety from which to deconstruct 'certainty' in personally meaningful ways. This makes me particularly passionate about supporting opportunities for people occupying positions of uncertainty to author their stories. I also believe that continuing to reflect on certainty and uncertainty in relation to constructing identities, will support me throughout this project to remain open and curious in forwarding participants' idiosyncratic experiences of selfhood.
- Today participants and I discussed the metaphor that would bring some of their stories to life. Discussions were lively and people talked a lot about their cultural heritage and different metaphors used that made sense to them. It was quite hard to find something that would resonate with everyone, as the richness of people's diverse backgrounds meant that agreeing on one

metaphor was difficult to achieve. The 'Passport of Life' was selected on the basis of its applicability and acceptability. We felt that this metaphor offers a way of supporting participants to reclaim their identities and rights to safely cross borders.

- During discussions I was particularly conscious not to 'overwhelm' participants; not to ask 'sensitive' questions; not to 're-traumatise'; not to put pressure. Upon reflection, I realise that my initial interactions with participants have inadvertently been shaped by dominant discourses, constructing refugee people as 'damaged'. I understand that my initial pre-occupation with not traumatising participants, shaped by my interaction with dominant constructions of refugee people in the West, might have produced subtle forms of victimisation and disempowerment. I wonder whether my initial positioning was also influenced by my identity as a trainee clinical psychologist, having been working and training in a western medicalised system, which honours (and constructs) pathology and disablism. How can I support myself to be aware of such othering practices in my interaction with participants? How can I bring subordinate resistance discourses to the forefront of my thinking? The metaphor itself might be a way of foregrounding those stories, whilst continuing to be reflexive about these issues is paramount to safeguard against inadvertent pathologising of participants.

## **C.2. Individual Story-telling and Analysis of Transcripts**

- Kelvin
  - I found the process of transcribing Kelvin's verbal narrative a reasonably straightforward experience. His story was organised and articulated with clarity. I wonder whether Kelvin's status as a refugee man affords some level of certainty - always in comparison to the asylee status - and, thus, allowing for a more seemingly coherent story-telling. That is, I wonder whether Kelvin's newfound sense of stability, even if still precarious to some degree, is implicated in the ways he organises his narration.

- I was impressed by Kelvin's bold reclaiming of his identity as a Black African gay man. I was pleasantly surprised by his attention to his cultural and racial subjectivities in that it challenged the expectation that refugee people should reject what is dominantly constructed as their 'uncivilised' heritage and embrace the new 'liberating' ways of life in the West.

- As a migrant man myself, I can empathise with Kelvin's construction of his past. Living in the UK and experiencing the Brexit uncertainty has brought me closer to looking at and reflecting on my roots and what this means for me and the ways I see my future. Therefore, I wonder whether Kelvin's need to narrativise and, through this, strongly affirm his ethnic, cultural, and racial identities are linked to his being in exile. Is he more aware of being Black and African because he is in a White dominated and racially abusive context? Would his story be similar or different if it was told in Africa? I find those questions helpful to bear in mind when analysing the data as they help me to preserve polyphony and situate the narrative in context.

- I also appreciate that Kelvin's narration happened in the context of his interaction with me, a White man. I wonder how this was experienced by Kelvin. Were his efforts to discursively reclaim power on the basis of his racial and ethnic identities also an attempt to reshape power dynamics between him and myself?

- Stella

- I felt very strange in conversing with Stella. I felt that our interaction resembled more an interview than a discussion in a collective space. I felt very conscious of my power and privilege and to some extent felt overly protective towards Stella, yet paralysed by some of her experiences. I also felt very ambivalent; really wanting to talk with her about her experiences and at the same time feeling the urge to shy away from them. I wonder whether this is partly a reflection of the setting, in that Stella could not attend the group meetings and I agreed to meet her on a one-to-one basis. This made the context feel more intense and inherent power imbalances feel more pronounced. I was also conscious of Stella's financial difficulties and felt very



guilty for not making a case for compensating participants for taking part in the study. One of my intentions is to try and bring this aspect of being an asylee (i.e. destitution) forth during the analysis. To make sure that Stella was coping ok throughout our interaction we were having regular breaks and I was checking in with her to see if she was still happy to continue.

- I found it particularly difficult to hear some aspects of Stella's story. She was the only one out of all participants to talk about torture and she was the only one who had to leave her children behind. I felt very humbled when Stella decided to share those aspects of her experience with me. It was also very difficult to grasp the scale of her suffering given our differential contexts and experiences. When she was re-telling her experience of being abused within patriarchal contexts, I felt like I was being the abuser. At those times, I felt very conscious of my 'Whiteness' and maleness. Perhaps, sitting with these uncomfortable feelings was a way of understanding Stella's distress. Also reflecting on these allows me to put power at the forefront of the analysis.

- I notice that during the analysis I am focusing a lot on issues around patriarchy, power, and gender inequality. I feel that this is appropriate given Stella's narrativisation of resistance within the context of her gendered and cultural subjectivities. Nevertheless, I am conscious that much of Stella's experience (e.g. domestic violence, gender inequality) is located within her African context, which means that I need to be extra cautious in my final write-up not to reinforce false assumptions that these issues are not prevalent in the UK context, and, thus, inadvertently reinforcing dominant constructions of suffering as located only within certain geo-political contexts.

- Approaching Stella's narrative through analytic lenses I become drawn to the inconsistencies between her subjectivities. She identifies as a lesbian, yet she has children from a 'straight' marriage; she shares that she suffered domestic violence, yet she is very strong and she never gives up. This really makes sense to me and resonates with how I see some of my subjectivities in context, and in constant transformation. To me this makes total sense as having left my country meant that I have been exposed to new contexts, new information, and new dynamics within which to make sense of my experiences and identities. I wonder whether my thoughts about the analysis

would have been different if I had not crossed borders. However, reflecting now on my reflections, I wonder whether approaching some of Stella's subjectivities from a 'normalising in-cohesiveness' lens, is ultimately shaped by my growing up in a heteronormative context. That is, that suggesting that being a lesbian and having children may be incompatible reflects dominant heteronormative readings of queer sexuality, motherhood, and procreation.

- Dom

- I found Dom's idiosyncratic use of language very intriguing. When transcribing it got me thinking whether the grammar, syntax, and words appropriated betrayed something of his mother tongue and idiosyncratic use of language or whether this was a reflection of having to share his story in a foreign language. This makes me consider the things which I have taken for granted during this project, such as people's willingness and ability to construct their narratives in English. I wonder how many of the nuances present in participants' meaning making process might have got lost as a result of using English.

- To some extent, I felt that Dom prioritised his religion over his ethnic background in scaffolding mechanisms of resistance and grounding his cultural heritage. I found this very interesting. This is very different to how I see the world. I need to be cautious here because my lack of understanding of Muslim values and cultural codes may result in othering, contributing to reductionist assumptions suggesting that *all* Muslims might prioritise religious over ethnic identity. I also find his bridging the gap between being outcasted by a strict Muslim family and yet performing a resistant 'self' through an personal relationship with his faith extremely interesting. To understand Dom's reconciling of seemingly incompatible experiences, as a non-religious person, my instinct would be to interrogate Dom's narrative to see if he is making distinctions between religion (as an organised system) and faith. However, I refrain from doing so, as this would be very much in sync with my own ideas and prejudices. Instead, I am guided by Dom's idiosyncratic relationship with his religion (he does not narrativise distinctions between

faith, religion, God), to understand how Dom performs an accepted and strong 'self' in the backdrop of what is known – I'm referring here to Dom's upbringing and dominant cultural discourses.

- How do I situate myself in relation to Dom's experiences of confinement in the UK? Dom portrays an incarcerated 'self' under the continuous gaze of elderly figures, dictated by values which underline familial hierarchical systems. This is not that hard for me to grasp. I have been brought up in a more collectivist society than the UK, which prioritised family values and collective forms of being; albeit still informed by neo-liberal discourses, which render individual independence as the norm. To do justice to Dom's story, I have to let go of false assumptions of 'being near' Dom, and really engage with the deadlocks that take shape through his narration. Dom's story demands my bearing witness to my privilege to independently and safely cross borders (at least before Brexit); to exercise my ability to work in a foreign country, so that I don't need to be under anyone's protection to survive; to be able to be who I am. I believe that it is only through interrogating that temporal and contextual privilege that I can come closer to understanding the level of oppression experienced by Dom.

- Kaba

- Kaba's story reminds me (and us) that identities are constantly in the making as people move in and out of contexts figuring out new coordinates. I was struck early on by Kaba's understanding of her sexuality, which highlighted a transition between a felt and embodied experience in Africa to an outspoken identity in the UK. Thus, the performance and performativity of her queer 'self' mirrored the opportunities and limitations given in the diverse contexts within which such acts were constituted. During the analysis, I read a lot about African sexualities to understand how people from other ethnic and racial backgrounds experience their queerness and hold in mind the diversity in its expression. I believe that this helped me to do justice to Kaba's polyphonic narration. However, I remain curious about the idea of one developing knowledge about their sexuality in the UK and, as such, expressing it in

different ways. Could this inadvertently lead to encouraging post-colonial western discourses that privilege this idea that people of the Global South get enlightened when in the West? I think this is a very tricky issue. On the one hand it is important to follow Kaba's lead in challenging reductionist and false claims regarding a stable essentialist view of selfhood, and on the other, if interpreted through a white supremacy lens, a case for an ever-becoming 'self' may sustain racialized dichotomies between the West and the rest of the world. I think that such dilemmas are relevant and a testament to the many complexities present, and that, in order to mitigate such biases, attention should be given to *who* does the authoring of the ever-becoming 'self'.

### **C.3. Collective Story-telling and Analysis of Transcript**

- Being part of the collective story-telling was a very refreshing experience. There was something in being and talking together that I felt enabled participants to shape a 'one voice'. I felt that through collective story-telling participants crafted a shared purpose, a shared cause, and a shared identity. I did very little talking, which was great, feeling that it really provided the chance for participants to structure the session as they wished to. This made me feel very at ease with my role and reminded me about how much I enjoy facilitating group spaces, where I feel that power imbalances might more easily be questioned or talked about.
- Transcribing the data, I have observed how much more outspoken participants were about difficulties that they encountered in the UK. The way I make sense of this is that during individual story-telling, whereby I felt that power discrepancies were more pronounced, participants, especially those seeking asylum, might have felt the need to sustain their hope for a better life in the UK and refrain from storying the UK as a challenging place to be, perhaps in fear of undermining their asylum claims. This is something that resonates with me a lot, as being away from your country of origin comes with

sacrifices, which you need to tell yourself that are worth making, so as to sustain hope and 'keep going'.

- Furthermore, collective spaces are places of solidarity, comradeship, and places whereby people can develop a critical awareness about their circumstances. I felt that this ultimately reshaped the dynamics in the room, offering some sort of collective protection, collective power to more openly challenge wrong-doings, whilst daring to dream of a more equal future.
- What strikes me in people's talk is their engagement with mainstream western language conventions and symbols to describe their queer sexuality. I was quite surprised by that in the beginning, as I was assuming that people would have had a more diverse lexicon to denote diverse sexualities, perhaps based on their respective cultural reference points. Reflecting back on this, I feel that I was quite biased by the way I position myself towards labels, global sexuality descriptors, and stereotypes. My own experiences and ways that I see the world have allowed me to question such conventions. To some degree, I was also being quite oblivious to the power of western cultural imperialism. I also consider myself to have been quite naïve, as in my privileged position - as someone who has grown up with some kind of cultural representation of queerness (although I have to say quite limited and to some extent demeaning in the Greek context) - I initially overlooked the censoring realities that participants endured, whilst growing up, which ultimately had restricted opportunities for publicly making sense of and developing a culturally-resonant knowledge about their sexuality.
- It is possible that I, as a White man, represented to some extent the heteronormative racially-abusive western system that participants have to navigate to ensure safety. In this regard, I wonder whether I had to be convinced by participants' speech regarding their genuineness and trustworthiness; whether I had to be convinced regarding their worth on the basis of historic and current racialised violence; and whether I had to be

convinced about their skills, talents, hopes, dreams, values, humanly nature, in the context of othering on the basis of refugeeness.

- The analysis that I pursued in this text focuses very much on how participants' marginality can be a site for dominant resistances. However, I am conscious that to some extent I occupy a 'closer to the centre' place. How might this have affected what I noticed in participants speech, what I neglected, what I emphasised, what I obscured? These are questions that I have had in my mind since I became interested in this area. In my last placement, where I worked with unaccompanied minors, I found supervision helpful in really thinking about my (our) positioning and role in supporting people from similar backgrounds. What is therapeutic and what not? How do we conceptualise suffering? How do we engage with this population and how do we contribute to the shaping of this relationship and on what terms?
- The way I have navigated issues of marginality and centrality in this text mirrored closely participants' own narration. That is, that I found helpful to think about participants' plea as a universal one. What I experience through their story-telling is an attempt to bridge differences through constructing people as one. The way I understand this is that we are all humans on the same platform, seeking freedom and equality, whichever way this translates into each person's life and whichever point on the marginality/centrality continuum each and every one of us occupies, has occupied, and will occupy based on their intersectional experiences. Sexuality, belonging, border crossing, race, and ethnicity are all continua affecting everyone, with some being advantaged and some disadvantaged by the socio-politico-economic establishments, which construct marginality. Of course, this universality must not dilute diversity and, in fact, experiences of oppression and marginality. It does transform these, however, to universal matters, constituting social action as everyone's matter. This is the direction I have followed in this project. A direction that was firmly based upon valuing the insights that marginality brings (centring marginality). That is, the insights that BME LGBT refugee and asylee people bring from their position, which are often missed.

- But the question for me, as a researcher and therapist, being interested in facilitating healing amongst BME LGBT refugee and asylee people will remain, – and to some extent should remain – have I adequately addressed the intersections between race, ethnicity, sexuality, and refugeeeness?; have I adequately kept my assumptions, Whiteness, hetero-and-homonormativity in check?; have I retained participants' marginality when conveying experiences of resistance?; to what degree have I responded to the research questions through an ethical lens? I encourage all readers to keep those questions at the forefront of their thinking when reviewing this text, also to reflect on their own biases, assumptions, and distorted re-presentations of this population.

## APPENDIX D – ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

### School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

### NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

#### For research involving human participants

BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

**REVIEWER:** Laura Mcgrath

**SUPERVISOR:** Maria Castro

**STUDENT:** Spyridon Papadopoulos

**Course:** Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

**Title of proposed study:** TBC

#### DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.
2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

#### DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

*(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)*

APPROVED



**Minor amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

**Major amendments required** *(for reviewer):*

**Confirmation of making the above minor amendments** *(for students):*

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature):*

Student number:

Date:

*(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)*

**ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER** *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES / NO

**Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment**

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

HIGH

**Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.**

MEDIUM **(Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)**

LOW

**Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).**

**Reviewer** (*Typed name to act as signature*): Laura McGrath

**Date:** 18/2/2018

*This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee*

**RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:**

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

## APPENDIX E – PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

### PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER



You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree it is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **Who am I?**

I am a doctorate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London. This research you are being invited to participate in is being conducted as part of the Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology.

#### **What is the research?**

I am conducting research into the experiences of LGBT people of African and Asian ethnic backgrounds, who have fled their home countries due to persecution related to their sexual orientation. I am particularly interested in hearing the stories that people can tell about how they resisted mistreatment (eg. discrimination, stigma, oppression). I am hoping that through exploring collective stories of resistance we will gain better knowledge about what promotes healing from the predicaments that LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people of African and Asian ethnic backgrounds have been exposed to.

My research is subject to approval by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research will follow the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

#### **Why have you been asked to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in my research as someone whose lived experience might provide helpful insights in exploring the research aims stated above. I am looking to involve LGBT people of African and Asian background who have sought, gained or are in the process of seeking refugee/asylee status due to persecution based on their sexuality. I am looking for people who feel comfortable to share their stories in English.

You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way and you will be treated with respect. I am hoping that participating will give you a space to tell your story in your own terms. However, if you feel that this may cause distress then it is more appropriate that you take care of yourself by not taking part in this study. You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

#### **What will your participation involve?**

If you agree to participate you will be asked to join a series of 'workshops' with other people from similar backgrounds, where there will be a group discussion about things that helped you to keep going throughout your journey. You will also be asked to have a central role in the research process. That is that I intend to involve potential participants in all stages to make sure that both the content and process of the research is appropriate and valuable to you and your peers. More specifically:

- There is a suggestion to have 3 workshops that will approximately last for two hours.
- The workshops will be held in the space where the charity, through which you came across this study, organises their community events.
- In the workshops there will be discussions about people's experiences in relation to different parts of their identity (eg. sexuality, ethnicity).

- You will be asked about your story and about the things you did that helped, and continue to do so, to survive against adversity.
- During the workshops we may use creative means, such as metaphors to help us to bring the stories alive. I will discuss this with you and other participants first, to think about which means (if any) might be more helpful to use.
- Sometimes people wish to share their collective stories with others (eg. other charity members) to spread the knowledge and strengthen some of the stories of survivorhood. Sharing and documenting the stories could happen through creative means, such as creating posters, collective documents, using visual/audio data. You may wish or not to participate in this.
- The group discussions will be audio recorded. The audio recordings will then be transcribed and anonymised so that no-one could identify you from what you would have shared.
- You will be invited to participate in the analysis of the data collected (eg. transcribed data) to ensure that your voice and perspectives are heard.

I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding about LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people's experiences and journeys. I also hope that the findings will help psychological support services to gain more knowledge about how to stand by people that have been through similar experiences to you.

### **Your taking part will be safe and confidential**

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times.

- Participants will not be identified by the data collected, on any written material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research. All names will be changed.
- The information you will be asked to provide is your gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, your refugee or asylee status and time you have been in the UK in years and months.
- I might include segments of the information you provided in the write-up of the research. This is to ensure that the findings are related to what you shared and that are not made up. However, I will anonymise the information so that no one could tell who you are.
- Participants will have the right to refuse to answer any questions. Your decision to not answer any questions will have no negative impact on you.

### **What will happen to the information that you provide?**

What I will do with the material you provide will involve analysing and synthesising the information. This should include:

- Transcribing the audio recordings.
- Storing the data on a personal computer to which only I will have access.
- Sharing the anonymised data with my supervisor and examiners of the research.
- Sharing the anonymised data with the public (eg. through publishing) to help others gain more knowledge about LGBTQ refugee/asylum-seeking African and Asian people's unique experiences.

After the research is complete, examined, and passed I will safely destroy the audio recordings. I will aim to keep anonymised transcripts for three years after completion of the research to help support any publications.

### **What if you want to withdraw?**

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw after the workshop has been held I would reserve the right to use anonymised material that you provide. Because of the nature of group discussions it would be difficult to separate out your contributions as this may impact on understanding other participants' comments.

## Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details provided below:

*Spyridon Papadopoulos*  
*Trainee Clinical Psychologist*  
*U1725756@uel.ac.uk*

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor (*Dr Maria Castro Romero*) School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,  
Email: (*m.castro@uel.ac.uk*)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.  
(Email: *t.lomas@uel.ac.uk*)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

## APPENDIX F – CONSENT FORM

### UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

#### Consent to participate in a research study



#### **Collective Resistance as a Means to Healing. A Collective Narrative Participatory Project with Black and Ethnic Minority LGBT Refugee & Asylum-Seeking People.**

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

After you have carefully read the information, please tick as appropriate:

- ☐ I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study, which has been fully explained to me. ☐
- ☐ I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in all stages of the research (planning, execution, analysis of data) ☐
- ☐ Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. ☐
- ☐ I understand that this will not have any disadvantage to myself. ☐
- ☐ I understand that should I wish to withdraw, it may not be possible to have my anonymized data removed from the analysis and write-up of the study. ☐
- ☐ I understand that the anonymized findings will be published and shared with academics and the public. ☐

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

.....

Date: .....

## APPENDIX – G PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF LETTER

### WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research sought to explore the stories that you can tell about the resources you draw upon in order to survive. This research paid particular attention to how your story can be linked up to other people's stories, who might share similar experiences to you. In doing so, this research aimed to highlight ways of collective resistance against oppression and abuse and the collective ways of coping that you and others might draw upon.

Some people, who share similar experiences to you may wish to seek support from mental health services. However, there is little knowledge about how professionals can best respond to people's needs. This research was interested in providing useful knowledge about how support services can stand by people's needs through supporting and enhancing people's collective resources.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY DATA?

The data you provided will be anonymised so that no one could identify you. The audio data will be transcribed and password-encrypted. The data will be stored onto the researcher's personal computer to which no-one else has access. Anonymised data will be shared with the supervisor of this research and subsequently published to aid public awareness. Audio data will be safely destroyed once the thesis is passed. Anonymised transcripts will be safely kept for three years after the thesis submission to support any publications, after which they will be destroyed.

### WHAT IF I WANT TO STOP BEING PART OF THIS RESEARCH?

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without giving any reason or experiencing any consequences. However, if you wish to withdraw your data after data collection is complete, I will reserve the right to use your anonymised data in the analysis, synthesis and publication of the findings. This is because of the nature of the group discussion and the fact that it might be difficult to make sense of other people's views in isolation. If there are specific things that you shared that you might feel uncomfortable about, please let me know and I will omit them from the analysis and final write-up.

### HOW CAN I FIND MORE ABOUT THE RESEARCH?

If you wish to learn more about this research please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor (Spyridon Papadopoulos, [u1725756@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1725756@uel.ac.uk), Dr Maria Castro Romero, [m.castro@uel.ac.uk](mailto:m.castro@uel.ac.uk) ).



## WHAT IF I NEED SOME SUPPORT?

CHARITY/ ORGANISATION	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT DETAILS
UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group	Provides support and legal advice to LGBT people who are seeking asylum or refugee status.	web: <a href="http://www.uklgig.org.uk/">www.uklgig.org.uk/</a> tel: 0207 922 7811 email: <a href="mailto:admin@uklgig.org.uk">admin@uklgig.org.uk</a>
Law Centres Network	Works with people who cannot afford a lawyer. Provides legal support and representation to individuals and groups (non-LGBT specific).	web: <a href="http://www.lawcentres.org.uk/">www.lawcentres.org.uk/</a> tel: 020 7749 9120 email: <a href="mailto:info@lawcentres.org.uk">info@lawcentres.org.uk</a>
Advicenow	Provides generic and independent information and advice on legal rights.	web: <a href="http://www.advicenow.org.uk">www.advicenow.org.uk</a> tel: 020 7401 7566 email: <a href="mailto:info@lawforlife.org.uk">info@lawforlife.org.uk</a>
Outcome	Operates as part of Islington Mind. Run by peers Outcome provides a space to support LGBT people who experience mental distress. They run a 'freedom from fear to love' group open to LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people.	web: <a href="https://www.islingtonmind.org.uk/vents/freedom-from-fear-to-love/">https://www.islingtonmind.org.uk/vents/freedom-from-fear-to-love/</a>  web: <a href="https://www.islingtonmind.org.uk/our-services/outcome/">https://www.islingtonmind.org.uk/our-services/outcome/</a> tel: 020 7272 5038/ 020 3301 9850/ 020 7272 6936 email: <a href="mailto:admin@islingtonmind.org.uk">admin@islingtonmind.org.uk</a> email: <a href="mailto:sigal.avni@islingtonmind.org.uk">sigal.avni@islingtonmind.org.uk</a>
Mindout	LGBT led organisation promoting LGBT people's wellbeing and mental health. Offers counselling, peer support and advocacy.	web: <a href="https://www.mindout.org.uk/">https://www.mindout.org.uk/</a> tel: 01273 234839 email: <a href="mailto:info@mindout.org.uk">info@mindout.org.uk</a>
Stonewall	Large LGBT charitable organisation supporting LGBT awareness. Has many useful resources on their website.	web: <a href="https://www.stonewall.org.uk/">https://www.stonewall.org.uk/</a> tel: 020 7593 1850 email: <a href="mailto:info@stonewall.org.uk">info@stonewall.org.uk</a>
Say It Loud Club	Organisation supporting LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people providing advocacy, advice, and peer support.	web: <a href="https://www.sayitloudclub.org/">https://www.sayitloudclub.org/</a> email: <a href="mailto:info@sayitloudclub.co.uk">info@sayitloudclub.co.uk</a>
London Friend	Charity offering a range of support services to LGBT people (also open to refugee and asylum-seeking people) including, counselling, sexual health advice, domestic violence support, support with drugs and alcohol and social groups.	web: <a href="http://londonfriend.org.uk/">http://londonfriend.org.uk/</a> tel: 020 7833 1674 email: <a href="mailto:office@londonfriend.org.uk">office@londonfriend.org.uk</a>
Helen Bamber Foundation	Offers psychological support services to refugee people who have survived trauma, torture and human cruelty. Available to people with a refugee status. Open to LGBT refugee people.	web: <a href="http://www.helenbamber.org/">http://www.helenbamber.org/</a> tel: 0044 (0) 203 058 2020 email: <a href="mailto:reception@helenbamber.org">reception@helenbamber.org</a>

*Thank you for participating in this research. Your time and contributions were much valued.*

## APPENDIX H – DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

### UEL Data Management Plan: Lite

For PGRs to submit to PhD Manager prior to Examination



**This ‘lite’ DMP is written at project completion stating what will happen to your research data: if you already have a DMP from earlier in your project you do not need to complete this form.**

**Plans must be sent to [researchdata@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchdata@uel.ac.uk) for review.**

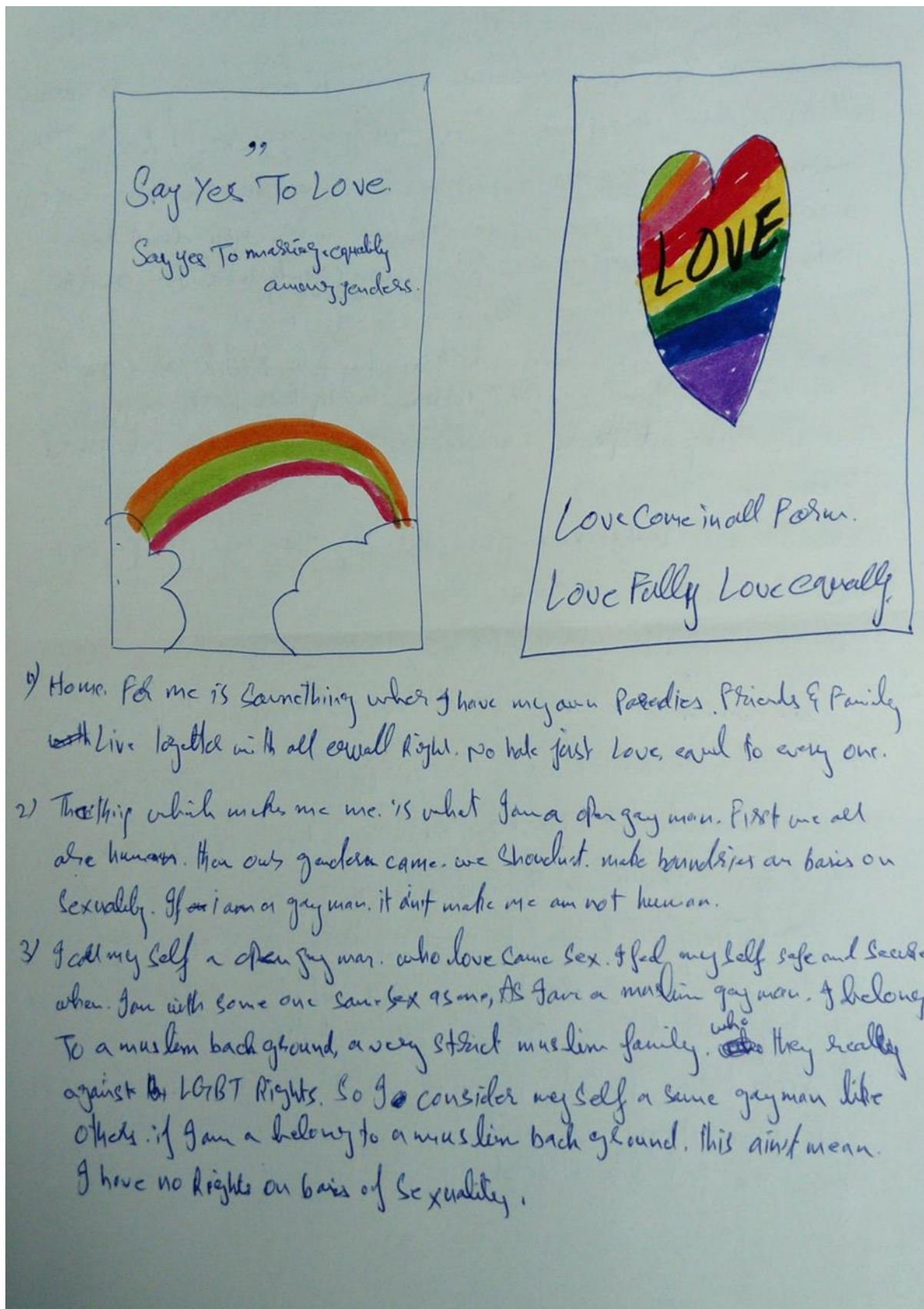
**Research data is defined as** information or material captured or created during the course of research, and which underpins, tests, or validates the content of the final research output. It is often empirical or statistical, but also includes material such as drafts, prototypes, and multimedia objects that underpin creative or 'non-traditional' outputs.

<b>Administrative Data</b>		
<b>Researcher</b>	Name: SPYRIDON PAPADOPOULOS	
	Email: u1725756@uel.ac.uk	ORCID: <a href="https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0473-8630">https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0473-8630</a>
<b>Research title and description</b>	<b>Collective Resistance as a Means to Healing. A Collective Narrative Participatory Project with Black and Ethnic Minority LGBT Refugee &amp; Asylum-Seeking People.</b>  The number of people forced to migrate is on the rise. LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people present with special psychological and socio-economico-political challenges; yet little is still known about how services can support their ‘healing’. Existing literature investigating ‘resilience’ in LGBT forced migrants has neglected to examine collective understandings of resources. This study proposes a collective narrative participatory design to explore collective ways of resisting oppression amongst Black and Ethnic Minority LGBT refugee/asylum-seeking people, in hope that this could offer valuable insights into how services can ethically stand by this minority’s needs.	
<b>Research Duration dd/mm/yy</b>	Start date: 02/ 2019	End date: 09/2020

<b>Ethics application reference</b>	N/A Applied for UEL ethics – they don't provide ref numbers																													
<b>Funder</b>	N/A																													
<b>Date of DMP</b>	First version: 13/01/2020			Last update: 24/01/2020																										
<b>Related Policies</b>	<a href="#">Research Data Management Policy</a>																													
<b>About your Data</b>																														
<b>What data have you collected and where is it stored?</b>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Data type</th> <th>Format</th> <th>Volume</th> <th>Storage location</th> <th>Back up location</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Anonymised transcripts</td> <td>.docx</td> <td>50MB</td> <td>UEL OneDrive</td> <td>UEL H: drive (but password protected)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Data type	Format	Volume	Storage location	Back up location	Anonymised transcripts	.docx	50MB	UEL OneDrive	UEL H: drive (but password protected)															
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	Anonymised transcripts	.docx	50MB	UEL OneDrive	UEL H: drive (but password protected)																									
<p>Consent forms are stored in a locked cabinet in my personal office. Once thesis is submitted and passed, I will destroy the files.</p> <p>Data comprise transcribed interviews with 4 participants and a transcribed focus group discussion. Transcription has taken place. All transcribed data have been anonymised at the point of transcription. Encrypted transcripts are stored on UEL onedrive and on my personal computer as a back-up.</p> <p>Audio data are stored separately on the UEL H: drive and are password-protected. These will be destroyed once thesis is submitted and passed. The anonymised transcripts will be kept for a three-year period (standard practice) following the submission of the thesis to aid for future publications. I made this clear in the participant invitation letter. After this period has ended, all data will be safely disposed of.</p>																														
<p>Personal data were collected verbally and prior to the interview. Personal data obtained and included in the write-up is participants' gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, whether they have refugee or asylee status and the length of time they have been to the UK. I recorded this information in a word doc (I created a table), linking demographic data with the pseudonym that was appropriated for the write-up of the thesis. I have then copied and pasted this table in the results section of my thesis. Pseudonyms are used for the transcription and write-up of the thesis. Any other identifying references present in participants' stories were omitted from the transcription process. No contact details of participants</p>																														

	were collected. No further data will be created in the process of analysing the transcripts.
<b>Documentation and Metadata</b>	
<b>What documentation and metadata accompanies the data?</b>	Participant information sheets, consent forms, and a debrief letter. Audio files and transcripts of interviews and the focus group.
<b>Data Sharing</b>	
<b>Other researchers may be interested in your data: can you share on <a href="#">UEL's repository</a>?</b>	Transcripts may be shared with the research supervisor via uel email to aid the analytic process. Transcripts shared will have been anonymised. Extracts of transcripts will be included in the final write-up of the thesis to aid transparency. All extracts will include no identifiable info. Transcripts (raw material) will not be shared with the public and will not be stored on UEL depository. The thesis (final write-up), once passed, will be stored on the UEL depository. I also aim to publish the findings through writing report, or article, or through a research conference. I have included this information in the participant information letter prior to interviews taking place.
<b>Data Retention</b>	
<b>Which data are of long-term value and should be kept?</b>	<p>Audio data will be destroyed once thesis is submitted and passed (from both personal and UEL servers).</p> <p>The anonymised and password-protected transcripts will be kept for a three-year period (standard practice) on my personal pc (personal drive) following the submission of the thesis to aid for future publications. After this period has ended, all data will be safely disposed of.</p> <p>Consent forms are stored in a locked cabinet in my personal office. Once thesis is submitted and passed, I will destroy the files.</p>
<b>Review</b>	Please send your plan to <a href="mailto:researchdata@uel.ac.uk">researchdata@uel.ac.uk</a>
<b>Date: 10/02/2020</b>	<b>Reviewer name: Penny Jackson</b> <b>Research Data Management Officer</b>

## APPENDIX I – 'PASSPORT OF LIFE' EXAMPLE (DOM)





- 4) I am a Muslim gay man, from a very strict family background. My whole family against LGBT Rights. I am the youngest in home. The problem what we have ~~exactly~~ in our culture specially in ~~our~~ <sup>my</sup> family is the younger will listen what a elder person says. It's like an order. whatever they say you have to agree. Does not matter if it is in your favour or not which makes really my self to step down. when you don't have rights to talk about your self. To tell my family what I am a open gay man is easy but to face them is like a life threat.
- 5) I don't have a specific person. who I say my role model, when I arrive in UK. every one I see a LGBT person. having their rights, enjoying their life going out openly. Friends, family. they all are role model to me.
- 6) Skills I have is to tell every one that yes I am a open gay man. skills to face every challenge. Fight for my rights. To live openly a muslim gay man.
- 7) If I talk about back home. we do have friends, best friend and family. But whenever it about sexuality no one support you. even one second you are like nothing to them. there are no any organization there to support you no government help no family help. life is like a death there for a open gay man. If any one knows about you, they could have. abuse you, beat you, they will throw stone at you. and its hard for you to leave home, go out, go school, and other places. To visit eat etc and if you stays home. your family, also, sister parents. abuse you. You feel like a dead man living



## APPENDIX J – TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT ANALYSIS (KELVIN)

Here I review the main steps that were followed during the analytic process using one transcript excerpt as an example.

Step 1: Dialogically engage with the narrative. What are my (emotional) responses to the stories?

4 can express myself with no prejudice, no racism.

5 IN: And do you have a picture in your mind, like what home look like for you?

6 A picture?

7 IN: Yeah, like have you thought about it at all? How would you describe it?

8 A quite place next to the beach, on the shore (laughs). That's my fantasy, yeah.

9 IN: And where is home now?

10 I can say that home now is the UK, because I tend to express myself [here]. For now I can say that

11 home is the UK.

12 IN: And what did it feel like back home?

13 Back home, I can say that it was quite hard, because I was not living my life with my choices but

14 regarding other people's choices. I had to suppress myself, not to do everything that I wished,

15 because of the fear of being prosecuted or persecuted or being judged and being outcasted as well,

16 being forsaken by your family.

17 IN: Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

18 Where I come from being a gay person is taken as a taboo, as an abomination. They do not

19 acknowledge that somebody can be in love with somebody of the same sex, because of the culture,

20 the traditions and the very big influence of the church as well. And one thing as well; there are no

21 role models or TV station. It's not something that they see. They don't see it and they are afraid of

22 the unknown and they are afraid to accept it. That's my perspective. And they regard it as an evil

23 thing.

24 IN: You mentioned that back home you were unable to be yourself. What did that look like? What

25 did you have to do in order to survive?

26 Basically what I had to do was to pretend that I get along. This is gonna sound bad, but like pretend

27 that I'm "normal", question marks. Like, yeah just be like the society down there people [based

28 on the way] you act. You don't want it but it forces you to be there. You submit, pretending that you

29 have a relationship with another sex even if you're not into that. It was quite bad, and difficult, and

30 depressing. Because it's not you, you're used to wearing a mask in order to please everybody.

31 IN: It's not the real you. Is that what you're saying?

32 Yeah, it didn't feel like it was me. It was a lie, all along a lie. And it was quite a bad one, because you

33 are the only one that is overwhelmed by it. You are the only person who knows it. You cannot

34 express it, you cannot tell anybody, you cannot tell even a friend because of the fear of the unknown

35 and what you have witnessed as well. [Because of] these kind of stories that people tell, and what

36 people preach, what the preacher preaches, what the government says about it. Somehow you are

37 just isolated in yourself.

38 IN: And how did you manage that? What did you so that helped you to manage?

39 I cannot say uhhh..., there's no managing it. It was like taking it day by day. As the days go you just

40 hope to survive it, you hope that somebody won't know. As the day goes by you just hope..., I can't

41 say that I had a problem to manage so that I can cover myself. The only thing I could do was like to

42 pretend that I was like them.

43 IN: And you mentioned hope. Where did that hope come from? Where did you get that hope from?

44 So you just have this hope that one day things will be good, like you know. It's kind of like..., you see,

45 You go on the internet and you see people who have fought for it and then you see the activists. And

46 it's still rough and it's still bad but you just have in mind that one day it's gonna happen, things will

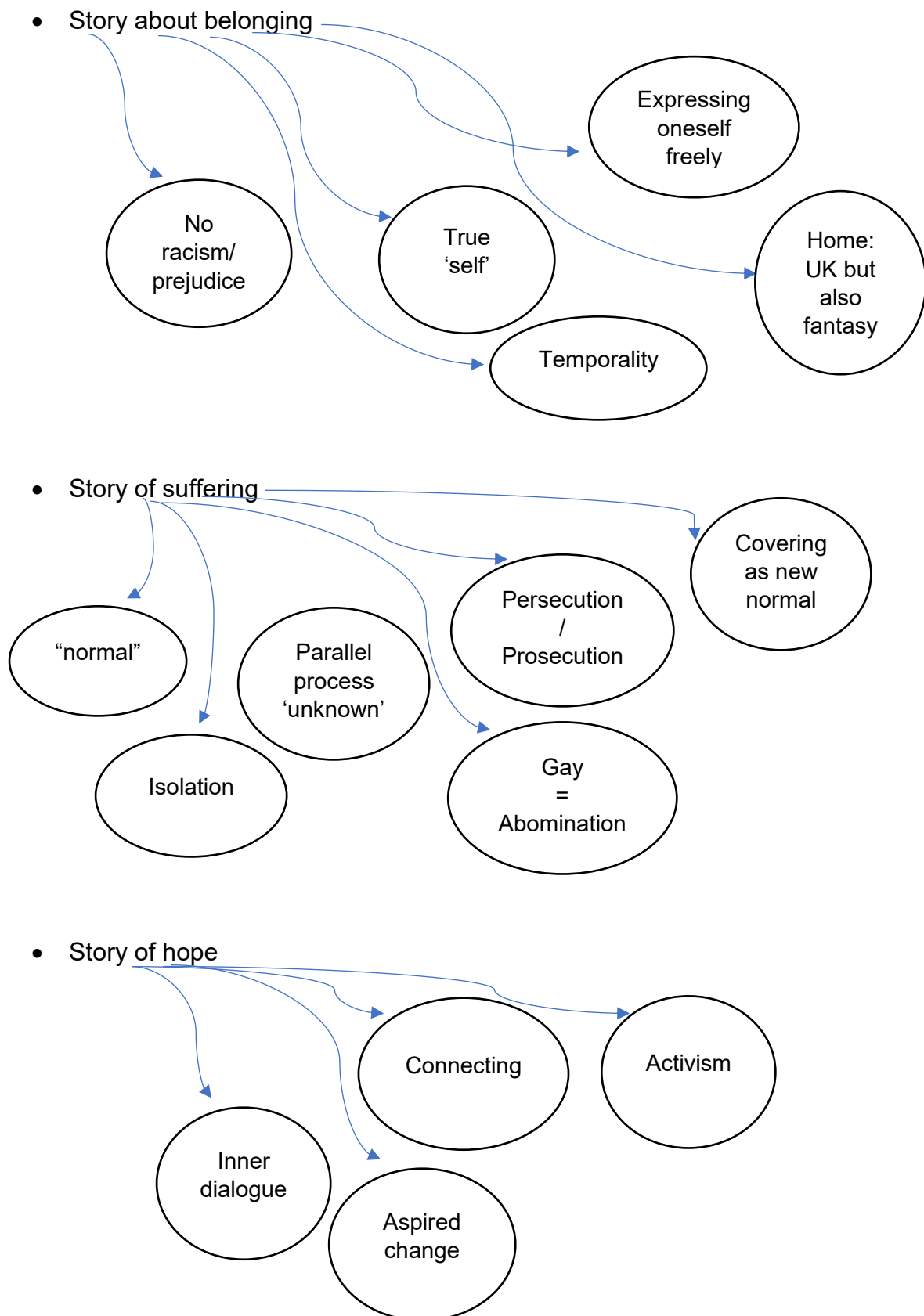
47 change. One day they will see it. But it was a kind of 'little hope'. And you move with it, taking a day

48 by a day.

*Handwritten notes:*

- Belonging* (near line 5)
- resistance* (near line 7)
- Irony* (near line 8)
- wish* (near line 8)
- contextual polyphony?* (near line 8)
- temporality* (near line 9)
- False self* (near line 10)
- threatened self* (near line 10)
- THREAT* (near line 12)
- resist?* (near line 14)
- Danger* (near line 14)
- who prosecutes?* (near line 15)
- who persecutes?* (near line 15)
- covering / resistance* (near line 15)
- place of responsibility* (near line 15)
- safety* (near line 15)
- DOMINANT STORY* (near line 17)
- emotional language* (near line 18)
- Fear of the unknown of others + fear of the unknown of themselves* (near line 20)
- threat* (near line 20)
- unknown* (near line 20)
- threat* (near line 20)
- suppression* (near line 26)
- sees* (near line 26)
- suppress* (near line 26)
- language* (near line 26)
- isolation* (near line 34)
- isolation* (near line 34)
- parallel process* (near line 37)
- survive* (near line 39)
- shaped* (near line 40)
- normality* (near line 40)
- hope* (near line 44)
- connecting with others* (near line 44)
- activists* (near line 45)
- inner dialogical process* (near line 45)
- correct* (near line 45)
- change - community level* (near line 48)

Step 2. What are the stories that jump<sup>7</sup>? How are they arrived at through narration?



<sup>7</sup> Refers to the stories told by Kelvin in the presented excerpt.



### Step 3. Where (else) in the text is this story told/mentioned?

- Story about belonging: [1-11], [76-83].
- Story of suffering: [12-23], [24-42], [51-56], [248-251], [255-264], [267-278], [284-298], [325-338], [341-345].
- Story of hope: [43-51], [60-64], [73-75], [300-318].

### Step 4. What are the different stories within those stories? How do they begin? How do they end (if they end)?

In this step, I reviewed the selected stories and excerpts alongside other excerpts in the text where these stories are articulated. This process aimed at highlighting the different stories within the stories, leading to the selection of the key narratives that were subsequently presented in the results section of this thesis. The selection of the stories was informed by their salience in participants speech, alongside the conversations that I had with participants, following the termination of the data collection process, regarding the main messages that they felt and wished that their stories communicated (inviting a meta-perspective). Through this process the 'story of suffering' was weaved into the 'story of the buried self', as described in the results section, whilst the 'story of hope' formed part of the lead 'story of overcoming'.

### Step 5. Analysis of the selected stories based on the performance/performativity and contextual polyphony axes.

