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## **‘Where can I get free? Everyday bordering, everyday incarceration**

### **Abstract**

*This paper draws upon the growing body of geographical literature on carceral spaces and carcerality to explore alternative sites of incarceration in everyday life and also to look beyond the state as a carceral actor and agent. In particular, it focuses upon ‘unfreedom’ and the punitive elements of UK immigration controls from the perspective of those who have left violent domestic situations and in doing so have been forced to apply for leave to remain in the country. The paper highlights the ways in which in enacting the spatial violence of immigration policies and controls everyday actors, such as sales assistants and landlords, become agents in the ‘continuum of unfreedoms’. The discussion, therefore, seeks to define carcerality beyond the institution as not only linked to institutional carceralities but as existing in and of itself in and around us in everyday life. In particular, it is argued that from a feminist perspective there is a need to better understand these everyday carceralities in the process of seeking asylum, as women are less likely to be incarcerated in state institutions. The paper also demonstrates the complex roles of non and quasi-state actors in shaping the ‘unfreedoms’ of everyday life for those seeking leave to remain in the UK as a result of domestic violence.*

### **Introduction**

Over the last three decades, immigration legislation has shifted the policing of the UK’s border away from the margins and into everyday life, as punitive measures seek to transform ordinary citizens into agents of the state, verifying the immigration status

of others (Yuval-Davis et al 2018). Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee (BAMER) people in communities across the UK are disproportionately affected by this shift as they have come to embody supposed threats to the UK's geo-political and economic security (Pain 2009). For BAMER women, such hostility intersects with existing gender-based discrimination (both in cultural and legal terms, Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). Nation-states enact a form of spatial violence (Gill et al 2014) through their attempts to control the movement of people across their borders, which is not separate from but connected to other forms of violence experienced by BAMER women, in a complex of violence (Pain 2015). It is the layers of this complex of violence and the ways that they incarcerate that I disentangle in this paper.

In order to develop a sense of this incarceration, I explore the situated gazes (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler 2002) of two groups of BAMER women subject to immigration control as a result of flight from domestic abuse. Many expected that in exiting the violent situation, in which they have been subject to extensive control, they would find new freedoms. However, in applying for leave to remain in the UK, they become subject to new, state-sponsored processes of control, which lead to a layering of carceralities echoing those experienced in the violent intimate and domestic situations they have left behind. It is in these situations that I argue the controls and lack of freedoms become so extensive that they can be described as a form of everyday incarceration. In fact, some of the women question not only if it would have been better to stay in the violence of the home (Dobash and Dobash 1992) but come to view suicide as their only way to find freedom. Uncovering the 'exclusion, resistance and gendered experiences' of carcerality have been placed at the centre of a feminist carceral geography agenda (Schliehe, 2017).

This paper seeks to develop feminist approaches within carceral geography by building upon the ground-breaking work in the field of feminist political geographies (Hyndman 2001 2003 and 2004; Sharp 2007 and 2009), which has transformed how geographers theorise geopolitical phenomena; by not only posing critical questions about spaces and agency of geopolitical processes, but also in using research on sites and people historically excluded from the geopolitical gaze. This work links shifts in theorisation from border(ing) studies, an arena in which political geographers have been key protagonists, to the emergent area of carceral geographies.

The research presented here is drawn from two interconnected projects. The first involved ethnographic research in two London boroughs from 2013 to 2015, as part of the EUBorderscapes project, work package nine, entitled Borders, Intersectionality and the Everyday. Some of the material presented here was gathered as part of producing the film, *Everyday Borders*, which (alongside others) was sponsored by a black feminist organisation in London. This included a focus group filmed with BAMER women who were being supported by this organisation. The research was extended by a further pilot study with a group of 15 BAMER women with a similar organisation in Newcastle, which involved participant observation over the course of a year. In the following section, there is an overview of domestic violence and UK immigration legislation, this then leads to discussion of everyday bordering, geographies of carcerality, and geographies of (un)freedoms and (im)mobilities, which are presented as a framing to the research. After a short methodological note, the paper then moves to analysis of the spaces and agents of carcerality encountered by the women whilst seeking leave to remain in the UK.

## **Domestic violence and UK immigration legislation**

Forced migration as a result of domestic violence in the UK is highly gendered (Bowstead 2015), with only 1.3 per cent of those relocating to access any type of Supporting People support service in England due to domestic violence being male (ibid: 310). Whilst earlier research had shown that BAMER women encounter greater difficulties in leaving abuse (Burman et al. 2004; Mama 1989; Minhas et al. 2002; Rai and Thiara 1997), Bowstead's (2015) analysis revealed that BAMER women represent a higher proportion of those accessing the same support services than they do within the general population, suggesting that the need to access domestic violence support services is not only gendered but also racialised. Indeed, extending this analysis further, social positioning clearly impacts upon not only whether someone experiences domestic violence (Kanuha 1996; Richie 2000; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005) but also their experiences of and ability to leave that violence (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005).

the trauma of domestic violence is amplified by further victimization outside of the intimate relationship, as the psychological consequences of battering may be compounded by the 'microaggressions' of racism, heterosexism, and classism in and out of the reference group" (Bogard 1999: 281).

Domestic violence is connected to and rooted in violence across other scales (Pain, 2015). This paper explores the interconnections between domestic violence or 'everyday terrorism' (Pain 2014a) and the spatial violence of state immigration policy, specifically seeking asylum.

The majority of co-producers of this research were women whose status in the UK was dependent on a partner or spouse and had survived domestic violence. Although a minority had become undocumented in other ways, e.g. overstaying visitor visas. In some cases, being forced to remain in the UK undocumented was part of the control

used by an aggressor. In spite of attempts to contain them by partners, families and communities, the women had all left their homes and as one participant put it, ‘thrown themselves on the mercy of the British state’ to protect and support them. This pathway is necessitated by the UK’s immigration legislation, which is embedded in postcolonial governance (Turner 2015; Wemyss et al 2017). Whilst a thorough review of immigration legislation and family migration is beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to note a few key points to frame the ensuing discussion. When a non-EEA national marries a partner settled in the UK and seeks to join them, they have to apply for a ‘family of a settled person’ visa (Home Office 2016a). They are not only expected to prove they are ‘in a genuine relationship’ and that any previous relationships have ‘permanently broken down’, but also need to meet a minimum income threshold and demonstrate a knowledge of English (ibid). Initial stays granted via this route are usually 33 months (27 months prior to July 2012), after which time an extension must be applied for. These processes incur costs and also make a national of a state outside the European Economic Area (EEA) ‘dependent’ on their settled partner to stay in the country. This adds a further level of complexity to the difficulties faced by those trying to leave a violent partner (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005; Warrington 2001).

There is a route for non-EEA nationals leaving a violent partner settled in the UK to apply for a visa and gain indefinite leave to remain but this route is often difficult to access: some do not disclose the violence immediately; others are refused this route as they could not ‘evidence’ the violence; others have partners who were not settled in the UK; and some have overstayed or not renewed their visa. Situations are complex and dynamic. Given the complexity of immigration controls and pathways to ‘undocumented’ status in the UK, recent legislation has been slowly de-

professionalising checks and enforcement and moving them into the roles of different social actors (Yuval-Davis et al 2018). The 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts, whose focus is to create a ‘hostile environment’ for so-called ‘illegal migrants’ (May 2012), mark the most recent and extensive measures in this process, which has been developing over a number of decades (Guentner et al 2016; Yuval-Davis et al 2018). Checks on immigration status are now undertaken by a wide range of actors from employers to landlords, bank employees, health service administrators and traffic police (Yuval-Davis et al, forthcoming). What is clear is that in leaving domestic violence some BAMER women face not only the possibility of destitution (Price 2002; Wardhaugh 1999) but also deportation.

### **Everyday bordering, geographies of carceralities and unfreedom**

#### *Everyday bordering(s)*

In spite of the vast resources designated by nation-states to border control, it is now widely accepted that borders do not seal off one entity from another (Reid et al 2013), but they also do not create a territory devoid of contestation from within (Cassidy et al 2018). These contestations are understood as ‘bordering’ processes (van Houtum and van Naerssen, 2002; van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer, 2005), through which both space and who belongs there are negotiated across a range of scales. This shift in the border studies’ literature reflects broader changes within the sub-discipline, including an interest in micro-politics (Philo and Smith 2003) and consequently everyday life (cf. Pain and Smith 2008). To begin to understand border(ing)s academics have increasingly sought to capture a wide range of forms and practices (Green 2013). In effect, border(ing)s have been ‘brought [...] in from the margins’ both in real and discursive terms (Lahav & Guiraudon 2000). These ongoing academic developments

have been accompanied by shifting politics and policy agendas in border control. Border policy and regimes have entered into everyday life both in the UK and elsewhere (Brambilla 2015). Members of BAMER communities are increasingly subject to ‘bordering’ practices in their day to day life (Balibar 2002) that produce inclusion and exclusion (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013). Consequently, ordinary people have become increasingly involved in doing this ‘borderwork’ (Rumford 2008; Cassidy et al 2018). In the UK a coercive regime of fines, penalties and custodial sentences have introduced bordering practices into the roles of employers, landlords, healthcare workers and teachers/lecturers (Yuval-Davis et al. forthcoming). All of this impacts upon the ‘conviviality’ (Gilroy 2004) of communities across the UK and particularly BAMER communities, who come to embody the geo-political and geo-economic threats that this legislation is intended to counter. This paper further explores the ways in which these differing actors negotiate spaces of everyday life. In doing so, it extends the vibrant dialogue between border(ing) studies and carceral geographies (cf. Gill et al 2018; Burridge and Gill 2017; Hiemstra and Conlon 2016).

### *Defining carcerality*

Whilst increasingly punitive immigration legislation is transforming the everyday life of urban landscapes, there has also been a growing interest in carceral spaces within geography; a shift linked to the wider ‘punitive’ turn (Moran, 2015). This work has been concerned with understanding carceral spaces themselves (cf. van Hoven and Sibley, 2008) and the geographies of carceral systems (cf. Gilmore, 2007) more broadly, as well as exploring the social construction of ‘carcerality’ as a set of spaces and practices and the relationship between these processes and the state (Moran



2015). Carceral spaces cannot be seen as solely located within prisons (Wacquant 2000), but as part of a continuum between the prison and other social and geographical spaces.

Neo-liberalisation in Canada has led to ‘practices that have formed carceral spaces beyond prison walls’ (Allspach 2010). Neo-liberal policy-making, which seeks to solve social problems through ‘criminalization and incapacitation’, impacts disproportionately upon poor, racialised women. If as has been suggested, the prison system has become a ‘prison industrial complex’ then what about the types of incarceration not bound up in this neo-liberalisation? As Gibson-Graham (2008) have suggested, the power of global, neo-liberal capitalism, lies not in its all-encompassing dominance, but its discursive violence, which renders alternatives to it invisible. Here, I suggest that the dominance of institutional carceralities within the carceral geographies literature represents a similar violence that obfuscates the carcerality of other spaces. I argue that such an approach is also highly gendered, as not only are men more likely to be subject to immigration detention, but in 2016 the annual average female prison population was 3,854, just 4% of the overall prison population, representing 16 women per 100,000 head of female population compared to 355 per 100,000 head of male population (Allen & Watson 2017).

Such gendering of carceral spaces also extends to immigration detention. At the end of the first quarter of 2017, 90% of the 2930 immigration detainees in the UK were men. Over the preceding five years, men outnumbered women in immigration detention, nine to one. Therefore, exploring the carceralities of immigration in the UK by focusing on detainees is highly gendered. As Moran et al (2013) have identified, there is considerable overlap between ‘mainstream’ imprisonment and the detention of migrants. Indeed, these experiences are often combined as foreign national

offenders spend time in prison for their crimes before then being detained in preparation for deportation (Bosworth, 2012). Seen as the nonconsensual detainment of human beings by others, this presents links to the ‘unfree’ nature of everyday life for migrants who are not physically detained in centres, and particularly the multi-levelled oppression of BAMER women, which is interpersonal, social, structural and institutional. In exploring these spaces, this paper will further theorise carcerality and incarceration particularly asking questions about spaces and actors currently absent from the carceral geographies’ literature and building upon a feminist carceral geography agenda (Schliehe, 2017).

Carceral geographies has increasingly become concerned with the carceralities of non-prison places such as immigration detention centres (Loyd et al. 2012; Mountz et al 2012), homes (Moran and Keinänen, 2012), psychiatric asylums (Philo, 2004; Curtis et al., 2013) and hotels (Minca and Ong 2015). It has been widely observed (after Foucault) that increasing incarceration in Western societies is not the result of growing ‘criminality’ (Wacquant 2002), but rather emerges from a shift towards punitive ways of seeking to resolve ‘social problems’, as defined by a dominant elite; or as a means for controlling and dominating problem populations (Herbert 2009; De Verteuil et al 2009). This is inextricably linked to neo-liberalism and late capitalism, i.e. ‘the ongoing need for capital’s expansion at the expense of marginalized groups’ (Gill et al 2018: 186). ‘Carceral circuitry’ has been presented as ‘a new way of critically apprehending the causes and consequences of the increasingly interconnected, more-than-institutional landscape of carceral spaces and practices that geographers and others have studied’ (ibid). This approach has not yet extended to some sites, which may not be have previously been considered to be carceral, yet share many of the same elements.

[T]he study of incarceration ceases to be the reserved province of criminologists and penologists to become an essential chapter in the sociology of the state and social stratification, and, more specifically, of the (de)composition of the urban proletariat in the era of ascendant neoliberalism. (Wacquant, 2009:16)

It is this question of social stratification, which is pertinent here, as I explore from a feminist perspective, the ways in which social positioning or ‘who you are’ matters in the context of everyday carceralities.

Those working in the field of carceral geographies have developed increasing complex understandings of carcerality. In their recent paper, Moran et al (2017) seek to delineate carcerality by three contingent conditions: detriment, intent and spatiality. With detriment, they focus on the lived experience of harm, which they argue leads to an incorporation of migrants in detention, as although there may be no punishment intended, many experience incarceration as punishment. Intention refers to the agentic element of carcerality and excludes illness, such as locked-in syndrome, which is not imposed on one body by another. Finally, they argue that carcerality is spatial – institutional or otherwise. Here, I want to show what an analysis of carcerality in the context of everyday life can bring to these emergent understandings. Although Foucault placed institutionalisation at the very heart of the emergence of the modern penal system, authors such as Wacquant and Allspach challenge us to look beyond the prison to explore contemporary carceralities. As we shall see in the work presented below, this means extending research on carcerality further, by exploring how for some people in particular places, it is linked to but located beyond the scope of institutional regimes.

### *Geographies of unfreedom and (im)mobilities*

The experiences of BAMER women described in this paper not only relate to how we understand carcerality, but also raise broader questions related to unfreedom and its geographies; in what ways are lives unfree and why some are less free in particular spaces than others? These questions have been primarily addressed in two current strands of geographical research: firstly, work on carceral (and wider coercive) mobilities (Turner and Peters 2017; Disney 2017) has illustrated the complex mobilities within and beyond prisons and other institutions; secondly, a range of work on ‘unfree’ work and labour (see Lewis et al 2015; Strauss 2013; Fudge and Strauss, 2014), which incorporates human trafficking, as well as elements of precarity in contemporary labour markets.

Lewis et al (2015) directly critique the creation of binaries in definitions of forced/free labour and suggest that a ‘continuum of unfreedom’ may better capture the labour market experiences of migrants. This focus on the continuum, reflects the work of Foucault in his description of the carceral continuum, which places the prison at one ‘extreme’ end, but has space for other forms of and sites of carcerality (Hamlin and Speer 2017). Unfreedom is produced in the ‘nexus of employment and immigration precarity’ and neoliberal labour markets and restrictive immigration regimes produce ‘hyper-precarity’ (Lewis et al 2015). ‘Unfreedom is not simply a consequence of being trapped in pre-capitalist relations in traditional contexts, but can arise because life chances are bound up with the way the whole of society and economic opportunity are configured’ (Morgan and Olsen 2015: 174). Labour is unfree if not entered into freely; the worker is not free to exit; and also if terms and conditions violate the worker’s rights and effect their well-being (ibid).

Unfreedom should not be viewed as merely an individual relationship of domination but rather as ‘a social relationship of insecurity and exploitation’, where ‘the fluidity of unfreedoms characterising diverse modalities of labour exploitation in the capitalist economy’ is significant (Morgan and Olsen 2015: 174). The ‘layering of insecurities’ marks out the hyper-precarity of migrants’ lives (Lewis et al 2015). However, the authors do not unpack how social positioning shapes experiences of this hyper-precarity, i.e. not all migrants experience precarity in the same way. We need to understand gender, class and race, and the intersection of these and other categories in particular migrants’ lives (Yuval-Davis et al 2018).

In their work on carceral mobilities, Peters and Turner (2017) create a distinction between what is outside the prison walls as ‘known’ and inside the prison as a space few will see. They argue that this enables the illusion of immobility and fixity of carceral spaces, which means little is understood about the mobilities of institutionalised carceral life. In this paper, I explore the role that forced mobility plays in the lives of women with uncertain immigration status during and after domestic violence. Michalon (2017) describes how regimes of so-called ‘tolerance’ in Romania for asylum seekers and migrants lead to particular controls on mobility, which do not equal total confinement, but nonetheless restrict movement. However, Michalon’s focus is on the restriction of mobilities in general, rather than the ways in which these restrictions might intersect with particular forms of forced mobilities. Felder et al (2014) have gone some way to defining a quasi-carceral regime, a key element of which is the regulation of mobilities (see also Altin and Minca, 2017). Therefore, we should consider not only how studying carceral mobilities can enrich the mobilities’ paradigm (Peters and Turner 2017), but also how understanding of the

disciplining and control of mobilities for particular groups can provide insights into our understanding of more-than-institutional carceralities.

## **Methodology**

The London-based research in this paper was part of work package nine of the EUBorderscapes project, which looked at Borders, Intersectionality and the Everyday between 2013 and 2016. A pilot study building on the findings from the earlier project was developed in the North-East of England. The methodology demonstrated particular concern that the project enabled an exploration of the issues faced by the women and also supported them to present their experiences to a wider audience. We sought to create transformative emotional spaces in order to mitigate some of the impacts of immigration controls on their mental health and wellbeing. Participant observation was undertaken in a series of participatory arts workshops supported by a therapist involving 15 women between January and May 2016. In addition, three research and development focus groups were carried out between September and December 2015.

The project used upon ethnography with participatory arts (ethno-mimesis, O'Neill 2008) to create potential space for the transformation of emotional engagements with everyday bordering and carcerality. The re-telling of narratives in artistic form captures more sensuous meanings and also offers outputs, which transcend linguistic barriers (ibid). BAMER women often lack the social capital to access the emotional support they need or 'voice' to counter broader discourses, which effect their social interactions (O'Neill and Harindranath 2006). Participatory action research (PAR) focuses on transformation and social justice for those who are marginalised (Fals Borda 1988), making space for research approaches that acknowledge and analyse

BAMER women's emotional experiences of the complex of violence and everyday carcerality, but also seek to transform these experiences through therapeutic support. Whilst the therapeutic model used by organisations working to challenge violence against black women and girls (VABWG) is primarily focused on the violence and trauma in domestic spaces. By incorporating the spatial violence of immigration policy and impact of everyday incarceration into therapeutic support the initiative is informed by work in emotional and psychoanalytical geographies, through which the importance of the relationship between research and counselling/therapy have emerged (Bondi 2013).

The work produced was a piece of textile art in the form of a board game, which sought to capture the women's experiences of the UK asylum system. From the beginning of the project, the women made it clear that they wanted their stories to reach a wider audience. Part way through the project, it became clear that the artwork in itself did not capture these experiences and the women went on to develop it into a computer game (which incorporated the original textile work, but was enhanced through sound recordings of the women narrating their own experiences).

### **Everyday bordering, everyday incarceration**

In the lives of BAMER women from outside the UK experiencing domestic violence from a UK-settled partner, immigration controls often become a means through which partners and their families can coerce them into remaining in the home, therefore to enclose or incarcerate them.

You know, my husband's family they were using my immigration status as a way to make me stay. His children, they were from his first marriage, would tell me that I would be nothing without them. They threatened to tell the Home Office about me, and they were doing this, I know, to get their story to them first. (Geneva, Newcastle)

Fears concerning their immigration status clearly contributed to a number of the women staying in their violent domestic situations and reflect the complexity of coercive but also spatial control in domestic abuse (Williamson, 2010). Fear is embedded in each woman's differential situated gaze (Pain 2000), meaning that narratives of the decision to leave were often varied (Pain 2014b).

You know for me, it was when he held a knife to my daughter's throat. She was three weeks old. [...] This was it for me. I had to leave. (Fozia, Newcastle)

The longed-for freedom of leaving their violent domestic situations did not appear due to the unfreedoms of everyday life subject to UK immigration controls. This life includes a number of key elements, which the women described as punitive and which also reflect the detriment, i.e. experienced as harm, referred to by Moran et al (2017).

This is again punishment, yeah. [...] Yeah, second [punishment. ...] Because before it is husband and family but after again punishment this immigration. Too much pain, yes.

(Shobana, London)

In the women's narratives of their experiences they clearly drew connections between everyday life in a violent home and everyday life when subject to immigration controls.

When you go out on the street, station or bus, immigration people they are checking your status. When you go to NHS [National Health Service], you have to show your passport. So, I feel so suffocated all the time [...]. I suffered my childhood; my brother was controlling my life. After that my husband and his family they were controlling my life and now [...] in this country the immigration is controlling my life. So every time, I feel like, where can I get free? I'm telling my counselling all the time, 'I want to breathe' [...]. I'm just watching out of the window. I'm not allowed to work; I'm not allowed to do anything. I'm just sitting at home.



And no money, no money for medication and every time I'm thinking it's better to die rather than living this kind of horrible life. (Niru, London)

In this section, three key foci of the layering of carcerality are analysed: controlled and forced (im)mobilities; home as a site of carceralities and unfreedoms; and finally, control over finances through limiting access to work and social support.

### *Controlled and forced (im)mobilities*

Questions of power have not featured prominently in the mobilities' literature (Moran et al 2012). 'Mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship' (Skeggs 2004: 49). At the same time the carcerality literature has neglected mobility (Moran et al 2012). Gill (2009a and 2009b) has made a powerful case for the ways in which forced movement of detained asylum seekers disrupts support for them from the not-for-profit sector, but it is important to understand how this relates to the forced (im)mobility of those who are outside of detention spaces.

Carceral or 'disciplined' mobilities are related to the theorisation of flight from domestic abuse and violence as 'forced migration' (Bowstead 2015). The key questions of control over mobility and not only the actors but the institutional factors shaping (im)mobility were often present in narratives of 'unfreedom'. It was evident that disciplined mobility operated across a number of scales. Frequent visits to Home Office reporting centres - in Fozia's case every two weeks for the last four years - forced the women to travel long distances in uncomfortable conditions. The reporting centre for women in the North East is now in Middlesbrough, which involves a bus journey of one and a half hours one way.

For Prisha, a woman living in Newcastle, this replaced the control her husband exerted over her mobility when they were together (Warrington 2001). She took two buses and travelled one and a half hours every day to get to work, as he limited her

budget to just enough money to cover a bus pass. However, other women were refused the right to work and with no funds were restricted by partners to the local area or even expected to stay in their houses with only accompanied visits being permitted.

The forced nature of immobility has also been theorised as characterising everyday life in international refugee camps (Hyndman and Giles 2011; Mountz 2011; Mountz et al. 2012) and Ramadan (2013) has noted to agency of actors beyond those driving the initial relocation in shaping (im)mobilities. When leaving their violent relationship, many of the women had been forcibly moved across the country to wherever accommodation was available.

You know I took my children and I ran. When I got there they asked me where I wanted to go and said they had a place in Newcastle and I was so desperate that I said OK. (Iffat, Newcastle)

Bowstead has explored the geographies of these mobilities or ‘forced migration’ in more depth, stating,

Their accounts show that they tried not to relocate, and often stayed as local as they could, but that a combination of the threat of the abuse and the availability (or not) of services shaped when and where they went initially. (2015: 312)

Kplorla, who had been living in London, felt much more affected by the move and had come to Newcastle from detention. Her move was not one of sanctuary but part of a broader control by the UK state of her movements through dispersal and privatised contracts of accommodation in the asylum system (Darling 2001; Darling 2016a; Darling 2016b). Many of the women involved in the research lived in constant fear of being raided or picked up by the Home Office Immigration Enforcement teams, highlighting the ‘deportability of everyday life’ (De Genova 2002).

They raid in the morning six o clock and in the morning it was so scary. My son started crying when they came and he was so scared. He was thinking, what going to happen next? What happen to my mum? What gonna happen to my mum? So, what gonna happen to my dad? They are so scared. (Minas, London)

The impact is not solely on the women but those around them as well, including children. So forced mobilities both in terms of everyday life but also in moves around the country had echoes of control from violent relationships. Therefore, forced and controlled mobilities are produced within the asylum system in the UK by a number of different agents and do not represent 'freedom' but are unfree in and of themselves, as well as being linked situationally to the unfreedoms of domestic violence and abuse.

#### *Home/carcerality/unfreedom*

'Home is a material and an affective space, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions' (Blunt 2005: 506). Part of feeling 'at home' has been described as being in a 'safe' space (Ignatieff 2001). Feminist work has challenged idealized constructions of the home for women (Rose 1993). Research has problematized the 'safety' of the home by highlighting domestic violence (Goldsack 1999; Wardhaugh 1999). A key factor in the relative lack of analysis of negative aspects of 'home' is the 'invisibility' of domestic violence itself (Brickell, 2012). This is similar to the sense of the unknown often viewed as being characteristic of institutionalised carceral spaces 'behind the wall' (Turner and Peters 2017). Home and control over the spaces of home were important recurring themes in all the women's narratives (Wardhaugh, 1999; Warrington 2001). For survivors of domestic violence, the home becomes a site of coercion (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005)

and punishment for non-compliance with the wishes of a partner/abuser and also at times others sharing the domestic space.

So on the one hand the state is saying, “Please come forward and report domestic violence and rape.” But on the other hand what they are not doing is protecting the most vulnerable in society and those are those women who don’t have a status often in the country or they’re imprisoned in their homes and can’t get out because there is a control over the family and the parents over somebody’s status. (Meena, London)

Here we see two important processes concerned with incarceration: firstly everyday or domestic spaces can be seen as carceral, as Meena also explained – many of these women are simply unable to leave their homes. This goes much further than to challenge the ‘home as haven’ thesis (Warrington 2001) or even the home as a site of violence (Pain 1997 and 2014b); secondly, Meena’s comment also makes it clear that non-state actors are active agents in this incarceration. Partners and their families may utilise immigration policy and the threat of the state and incarceration in detention centres.

The shifting of ‘border guard’ roles into everyday life, e.g. landlords, expands the pool of social actors contributing to the carceralities of everyday life. Being subject to immigration controls the women are open to further exploitation by landlords and employers amongst others. Under the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts, this situation is worsening. The ‘right to rent’ scheme pressurises landlords into becoming immigration officials checking on the status of their tenants. Research (Grant and Peel 2015) on the pilot of the scheme in the West Midlands showed that fearful of the consequences if they get it wrong, many landlords began to avoid renting to those without UK passports and for these BAMER women in particular, even when they have the right to remain, confusion surrounding their immigration status often pushes

them, as Sue Lukes (2015) has pointed out, to depend on unscrupulous landlords, who are already operating outside of the law.

It's like you are always afraid that maybe, one day, you will be thrown out on the street. Some landlords use it to intimidate you into sexual activities. The situation is degrading you as a human being because if you are in this particular situation, where you can't even afford to buy your medication, you can't pay for your house rent, you are forced [...] to do anything in order to get it. I am an example. There has been a situation where the landlord was telling me that it would be much better for me to accept his sexual advances in order to stay in the house. It's true. It's one of the things that made me to leave that place, but you leave it to a worse situation. (Dorothy, London)

Kplorla, a middle-aged woman living on Tyneside, had suffered violent attacks from another younger woman, the landlord of her accommodation in London, who was also from her country of birth but had documented status in the UK. The woman had used Kplorla's undocumented status (she had overstayed her visa and was working undocumented with her husband) to threaten Kplorla and frighten her into remaining in the accommodation. On Tyneside, she had been placed in a single-sex house of multiple occupation with younger women from her country of birth and she was fearful of being attacked once more. She described being limited to her room, frightened of walking down the corridors and using the kitchen. However, in spite of procedures being in place for her large corporate landlord to ensure that she was housed based on her needs and previous experiences, it was clear that in reality such processes were not being followed or implemented.<sup>2</sup>

There is a broader analytical point to be made here in relation to constructions of who has a right to share the home and who does not belong there. The UK government seeks to force these women and other so-called 'illegal immigrants' to return to their countries of birth by denying them access to basic shelter and services. However, as

we have seen, the home for women like Niru has always been a site of unfreedom, control and carcerality. Non-migrant women who have fled domestic violence also feel unable to return to their families and friends (Bowstead 2015), but are not faced with the hostility of a daily environment focused on ‘forcing’ them to do so. For these women, every home, whether that of a birth or marriage family or with strangers in UK’s ‘no-choice’ asylum housing system represented a space of unfreedom and carcerality.

### *Economic (in)activity and everyday geographies of unfreedom*

Whilst awaiting the outcome of their applications the women were not able to access either the labour market or social security payments. If they were able to prove that they will be ‘destitute’, they could claim a very low level of cash funds as well as housing.<sup>3</sup> For those whose applications had been refused but who were not detained (known as ‘immigration bail’), cash support was not available and they were issued with an electronic payment card (known as an Azure card) with which only food and essential toiletries could be purchased in certain outlets (Home Office 2016b).<sup>4</sup> Not all of the women were entitled to this support and both feminist organisations provided a weekly food bank.

The inability to work whilst in the process of applying for their leave to remain was seen to be another carceral element of life after domestic violence. Some, like Prisha from Newcastle, had been forced to give up work when they left their husband.

Yes, I worked in a beauty salon. It was all he would allow me to do, but I worked. He was controlling all the money but at least he gave me money for my bus pass to get to work.

For women who had worked during their domestic violence, control over finances and spending were a key element of coercion (McCloskey 1996; Lloyd 1997).

I was mentally abused. He controlled the money. I earned £710 a month. He took away all of it and only gave me £100 a month, everything can't wear this, can't wear that not even allowed to open the blinds of my house. (Farida, Newcastle)

So financial independence was bound up in escaping the trauma of domestic violence, and was constructed as a marker of freedom. However, Farida also refers to the enclosure of not being able to open the blinds in her home, disconnecting her from 'the outside'.

I mean as of now, when I think about it, obviously it is a huge struggle with my status [...] so as of now it is about what the Home Office decides for us, and if I get across, that phase, I would definitely want to get that financial independence for me as a woman, because I would teach my daughter how to be financially independent. Don't get tied down because that gives you so much power, so much freedom on its own I would say. (Farida, Newcastle)

Contrary to wider public discourses that often frame many of those as seeking leave to remain as labour or economic migrants trying to benefit economically from coming to the UK (Wemyss and Cassidy, 2017), Dorothy actually highlighted how much better her situation would be financially in Nigeria.

Staying here is just hiding yourself away from that situation you would find yourself in. Not that there is anything you are actually benefiting from here. Because when I look at my situation, my friends in Nigeria, my relatives are doing much better than I am. I have nothing, no savings. But all of them already have basis – they have had their house, they have had everything. I have nothing. So it is not money that is keeping me here, but protecting yourself against some situations you will find yourself in. [...] They don't understand that. They thought it is because of money or something like that. You are not getting any money! You are not working. Even if you are working you are only getting enough money to keep yourself, your food, your house rent, so.

Desperate for funds and occupation some of the women did look into working informally. However, even when gaining status in the UK recent immigration legislation was also leading to exploitation – or hyperprecarity (Lewis et al 2015) - as it places the burden of implementing immigration law on employers:

But sometimes you go to an employer to just get a job in a restaurant or whatever, in the shops. They say, “It’s a training period for one week. We won’t give you salary and you have to work.” And after one week, they say, “We don’t like your work.” And this way they just get the new people all the time so that they don’t have to give them salary. So these things they just degrade, they demoralise people.

So the ‘hostility’ created by recent immigration legislation limits the options of the women to support themselves and adds another layer of carcerality as they feel they have nowhere they can legally turn to.

The ‘Azure card’ tied those on immigration bail to spending in particular shops and also on certain items and was symbolic of another carceral element of the women’s everyday life, i.e. a lack of freedom to choose. For card holders, the British state decides what are appropriate purchases and necessities. Here the state directly takes the place of a controlling partner (McCloskey 1996), who as Farida explains above would determine not only how much money (if any) a woman was able to access but also upon what she could spend such funds (Lloyd 1997). It is those working on checkouts in retailers across the country, who are expected to ensure controls are enforced.

I remember one day I went to Boots to buy a deodorant and when I was going to pay I give it [Azure card] to the lady, she don’t know anything about it. So she called her supervisor, and she said I think you can only use it for food. I said, “How? I can use it for anything I want!” So she said, “Oh sorry you can’t use it”. [...] so I went to other bigger Boots and I went to small Boots in town, same thing I want to buy and I pay with it. (Kplorla, Newcastle)



I have a card like that, I have an Azure card I can only shop in Asda, Morrisons and Tesco.  
[...] One day we went to Asda, they said no you can't buy with these [Azure card]. I said, "I can I buy with it, because that's what I have". I went to Tesco, they also say that but later on they start selling [...]" (Prisha, Newcastle)

The women reflected on how the employees of the designated retailers were often untrained and refused them service as a result. Most had to walk considerable distances (2-3 miles) to access this retailer due to receiving no cash funds. Even when goods were being sold to the women, they felt that their immigration status being known because of the card led to unnecessary judgments, creating exclusion and demonstrating evidence of bordering processes in everyday encounters (Yuval-Davis et al 2018 and forthcoming).

And they look at you in a way [...] they just look at you as if to say, you are already down there, as if to say you are classed, as an outcast in a way, or lower and that kind of breaks my heart. Who are you to judge and who are you to kind of [...]? How do you know what capacities or capabilities I have within me? And sometimes you just have to take it. (Iffat, Newcastle)

Iffat: Whenever we go shopping, they say a lot of food, you are not allowed to buy a top up [for mobile phone] or anything, this card is not working, can you get money...we have a list, what we can have, what we don't have, but they ask in front of everyone and just...

Prisha: I know and people give you the looks like "okay".

In expecting everyday actors to administer the UK's border, the Home Office is not only creating internal borders or 'borderings', but separates and divides those seeking leave to remain from others in society; consequently spaces of unfreedom in everyday life are (re)created by a wide range of actors.

Iffat: Women are not integrating in this society, so we want to show that we can do, regarding language barriers and everything, we can do something, [...].

Fozia: So we as asylum seekers, we don't have any identity, in our own country and in this country, we haven't been accepted by this country and if we go back we will not be accepted by our own country, and we are just in between.

Iffat: Just being nothing in this society.

Not having a place or being integrated as they describe it shows that this separateness - being kept apart - is a form of carcerality. It might not be the wall of the prison that marks this carceral boundary (Combessie, 2002), but these processes situated the women outside of boundaries demarcating belonging in contemporary Britain (Yuval-Davis et al, forthcoming). Immigration controls b/ordering everyday life in a myriad of encounters, as wider political projects of belonging were enacted by differentially situated individuals undertaking their own b/ordering duties and layering not insecurities (Lewis et al, 2015) but carceralities on the women to create an everyday form of incarceration.

### **Conclusions: Everyday Incarceration**

Influenced by work in the sphere of carceral geographies, this paper has argued that those waiting for leave to remain in the UK experience carceralities in everyday life. I have shown that everyday bordering not only borders and orders spaces, but also bounds and delineates it. Certain groups within Britain, for example asylum seekers, are excluded from the freedoms of citizenship and subject to invasive control over their mobilities and finances. Everyday bordering relates not solely to exclusion from a dominant group but increasingly in Britain has come to frame refusal of access to a wide range of services and goods – from housing/accommodation to mobile phone

top-ups and deodorants. Therefore, everyday bordering is not only multi-agentic as more and more people are engaged in undertaking ‘borderwork’ formally on behalf of the UK government (Cassidy et al 2018), but also multi-layered. And it is this multiple layering, which impacts more on some groups within Britain than others and the increasing density of these layers – which are not solely related to social oppression on the basis of race and gender, but are also material and spatial – that create carcerality in everyday life for the women whose lives are explored in this paper.

I have shown that the layers of carcerality, which lead to everyday incarceration, are both gendered and racialised and that for women entering the asylum process as a result of leaving a violent domestic situation, the control that the UK Home Office exerts over their lives is often a continuation of those imposed by a spouse/partner or other abuser. The home remains the primary site of carcerality; mobilities and finances remain critical spaces in which numerous actors participate to bind others and create unfreedom.

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst some of the women did not seek confidentiality and wanted to be associated with the computer game and its launch, their names have been changed for the purposes of this article. Although some details are given, these do not enable identification, as many of the women were dispersed to the North East via the UK’s ‘no choice’ asylum housing system from other parts of the country. The real names of the women from the London focus group have been maintained, as they are publically available via the film *Everyday Borders* in which parts of the focus group feature.

<sup>2</sup> Under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, those seeking asylum in the UK could be dispersed anywhere and were not given any choice in relation. Since 2012, UK asylum accommodation has been provided by three private companies under the Commercial and Operating Managers Procuring Asylum Support (COMPASS) contracts.

<sup>3</sup> Support levels were set at 70% of those given to those who are unemployed. However, as energy costs and other household bills were paid directly to landlords, in cash terms those receiving support whilst applying for asylum receive less than 50% of the monies paid to the unemployed.

<sup>4</sup> Azure cards were withdrawn, alongside section 4 support, in changes from the 2016 Immigration Act, which came into force in 2017.

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