

Portfolio Volume 1: Major Research Project

**Exploring the Processes that Nurture the Resilience of Young  
Refugees Living in the UK**

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## Acknowledgements

‘Dear Child,  
For you, I seek safety  
For you, I seek welcoming spaces.  
For you, I join  
in the collective resilience and strength  
in the fight against all-too powerful forces  
that try to hinder you  
from being unapologetically *you*’  
*Morgan Harper Nichols*

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## Abstract

Literature on young refugees has predominantly focused on pathology, symptom reduction and barriers for accessing services and help-seeking. In recent decades there has been a paradigm-shift towards exploring factors that promote resilience of young refugees, however little is known about mechanisms that underlie these, and research has been critiqued for its focus on individual attributes of resilience. This research aimed to explore processes that nurture resilience of young refugees living in the UK, using a social ecological framework. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 12 young refugees aged 14-24 living in the UK. Data was analysed using Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology. A theoretical model was co-constructed, showing a complex, dynamic, reciprocal interaction of processes. This incorporated culturally meaningful processes that preceded living in the UK and which participants continued to draw on: 'seeking out rest and relief to go on', 'family togetherness sustaining' and 'comparing difficult experiences', leading to 'seeing the world anew'. Through this, 'being seen' then allowed for other processes to be facilitated, such as 'being protected from racism and bullying', 'being connected to people with shared backgrounds' and 'making new connections'. This was constructed to have an interdependent interaction with 'improving English language' and 'being shown the ways of living in UK' which fed into 'developing adaptability'. As a result, 'giving and giving back' and 'recognising a promising future' were the processes that followed. The findings point towards important practical implications for anyone working with young refugees as well as policymakers, who have a powerful influence on the way refugees are perceived and consequently interacted with.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This research is concerned with exploring processes that nurture resilience of young refugees living in the UK. This section begins with outlining the researcher's positioning and relationship to the research. Following this, an exploration of terminology and language used is discussed. An overview of the background literature is then summarised to provide context to the research, including the relevant legislations, policies and paradigm shifts within the literature.

### 1.2 Situating the researcher

Charmaz (2014) postulates that researchers can't stand 'outside' of the research, making it crucial to take into account the researcher's position, privileges, values, perspectives and interactions as inherent to the research (Charmaz, 2014). It is with this intention that I wish to introduce some aspects of my life contexts, to situate myself as a knowledge co-creator in this research.

As such, I have chosen to switch to writing in first person at relevant times to acknowledge the involvement of the self in co-constructing this research, whilst also writing in third person for the intended audience of clinicians, policy makers and academics, who are perhaps more accustomed to a traditional academic writing style (Wolff-Michael, 2005). Conventionally, academic writing has avoided writing in first person to eradicate the self for the sake of scholarly persuasion in line with positivist objectivity (Hyland & Jiang, 2017). However, such a neutral, authoritative and objective stance did not fit with the epistemological position of this research, as detailed in section 1.2.2.

### 1.2.1 Researcher's relationship to the research

I was born into a minoritized, ethno-religious indigenous group in Egypt. Growing up, I gradually became aware of structural inequalities and discrimination, driven by those in power. I was surrounded by two apparently juxtaposing narratives; narratives of my community being perpetually persecuted alongside narratives of the immense strength, unity and pride in identity that this persecution in fact gifted the community, for centuries. These paradoxical notions were not unfamiliar to Christian teaching and lived experience passed down to me; strength and victory in apparent weakness and defeat, glory in humility, having nothing and possessing everything, beauty coming forth from ashes. I experienced for myself that beauty *can* come forth. It was through this frame that many others and me found meaning, strength and comfort.

With a strengthened sense of identity, I later found myself as an immigrant child in the UK, after an unexpected and sudden move from Egypt. I had to draw on old and new relationships to navigate different and often conflicting cultures, continually negotiate identities (whilst being othered) and become embedded in new communities, whom became crucial to my wellbeing. This ignited a curiosity in me about support for those with similar experiences.

Working in mental health services led me to question the utility of current services as they stand for refugee people who may have different meanings and worldviews to ones presented by services. The culmination of these personal and professional experiences amongst others directed my interest in exploring this research topic. The political context of a sadly ever-increasing number of people becoming forcibly displaced across the world, together with a reported increase in expressed hostility and xenophobia towards refugees and immigrants in

the UK (Peterie & Neil, 2020) exacerbated by the UK leaving the European Union, gave me more reason to explore this now, in this unique context we are living in.

### 1.2.2 Epistemological position

It is important to clarify the researcher's epistemological position as this influences all aspects of the research, including the methodology, analysis and how quality was demonstrated and assessed (Carter & Little, 2007). The epistemological position adopted for this research was *critical realism* (Bhaskar, 1989). This position prioritises ontology through its assertion that reality (including social processes and mechanisms) exists independently of our interpretations and conceptualisations of it (Bhaskar, 1993). However, it does not assume that data constitutes a direct, mirror-like reflection of reality (Willig, 2013). Rather, it emphasises that all description of such reality, which it argues we should seek to access, is mediated through filters of language, meaning making and social context (Oliver, 2011). It therefore proposes that data needs to be interpreted in light of underlying structures, which generate the phenomena we are seeking to gain knowledge about (Willig, 2013).

Critical realism also acknowledges that knowledge is fallible, context dependent and transitive; people have to construct knowledge about entities, which means knowledge is always open to challenge and change (Haigh et al., 2019).

This epistemological position was chosen as it matched the researcher's aim of exploring mechanisms and structural powers that influence participants' accounts (Albert et al., 2020). Considering participants' contexts of war and persecution leading to forced displacement as well as racism, xenophobia and inequality, the researcher felt it would be unethical not to attend to such structures.

The implication of adopting this position is that the researcher was not seeking to ‘discover’ empirical data, but rather was aware of her own role in the co-construction of data with participants, as well as the need to factor in underlying structures and processes.

### 1.2.3 Researcher positionality; ‘insider-outsider’ positioning

Insider researchers have been regarded as those sharing characteristics or experiences with participants, making them a legitimate ‘member’ of the community and giving them a particular understanding (Atfield et al., 2012). This may include the sharing of an identity, language and experiential base with research participants (Asselin, 2003). The implication is that there may be a sense of safety, acceptance and increased trust towards an insider researcher, but also that the researcher may need to pay particular attention to bracketing their assumptions so as to prioritise participants’ meaning-making (Atfield et al., 2012).

The researcher shared certain characteristics with participants, such as cultural codes, language, ethnic minority status and having parents who had to re-start their life in the UK, but differed significantly and visibly on others, such as refugee status, religion, gender, age, length of time in the UK, educational and occupational background, researcher identity and all the privileges associated. The ‘sameness’ in some aspects could arguably accentuate the differences in others (Carling, Erdal, & Ezzati, 2014), influencing how each are perceived by the other. In addition, positivist assumptions regarding certain researcher positions eliciting ‘truth’ have been called into question, together with the recognition of great diversity within communities (Atfield et al., 2012). Being perceived as a cultural insider does not automatically advantage research, depending on participants’ experiences and assumptions and expectations (Halilovich, 2013).

Rather than drawing on a binary understanding of positionality, the researcher found it helpful to consider and appreciate the nuanced ways in which the positioning of the researcher and participants are fluid, complex, multi-layered, contextual and relationally constructed (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), and how this might impact the power imbalance, and ultimately the research data. To work within the tensions of straddling different relational identities and positions, the researcher needed to rely on reflexivity. This is expanded on in section 3.3.9.

Alongside reflexivity, it is important to acknowledge the implicit power imbalance that also comes with the researcher-participant relationship (Allen, 2011). This is discussed in section 3.3.4.6 and throughout.

### 1.3 Taking a critical perspective on knowledge production processes

*‘...all knowledge reflects the values and interests of its creators.’ – James Banks*

Before defining terminology and exploring background literature relating to this research, it was important to acknowledge epistemic inequalities. It has been argued that current mainstream research epistemologies, that is, the legitimated ways of knowing, are social products of the dominant White ‘western’ race and influenced heavily by European colonisation (Young & Scheurich, 2001). Invisibly, these epistemologies have become so deeply embedded, that they are regarded as the norm, rather than socially constructed (Young & Scheurich, 2001). This has meant that other epistemologies arising out of other social histories have often been excluded and applications of such epistemologies and methodologies have at times distorted the lives of other racial groups (Young & Scheurich,

2001). Therefore, who is listened to, how, and why has all been influenced by such privileging of certain epistemologies. This is important to consider as the researcher next consults with existing literature, as is required of academic work. This has significant implications.

Inspired by feminist and postcolonial ideas and epistemologies, the aim of this research was therefore to centre silenced voices in attempting to overcome some of the biases of mainstream research, whilst keeping a critical perspective on the knowledge production processes in use (Albert et al., 2020).

#### 1.4 Terminology

##### *Refugee*

The United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951) defined the term as a person who is:

“unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (p.2).

The terminology used to represent refugees is contested. Whilst taking the position that categories are social constructions (Latour & Woolgar, 1986), it is argued that they have significant implications and require careful consideration (Goodman, Sirriyeh, & McMahon, 2017). It has been suggested that the use of the words ‘migrant’ and ‘illegal’ in the media in the context of people fleeing their countries presents people as undeserving and infers they are a ‘burden’ in some way that requires local populations to sacrifice something to support them (Goodman et al., 2017). This can dehumanise and increase hostility in host countries.

Official legal statuses categorise people to determine how much support and protection people receive and in turn influences how they are perceived. Therefore, the researcher decided to choose the word ‘refugees’ to represent anyone who self-described as being so at this point in their lives, regardless of legal status.

### *Young*

The World Health Organisation (1986) defines ‘young people’ as those aged 10-24. Therefore, this definition was adopted. Crawley (2007) warned of the harmful impact of a culture of disbelief in relation to age during the refugee status determination process. Consequently, it was important to the researcher that young people self-identified as fitting the age bracket required, without any need for verification.

### *Resilience*

The concept of ‘resilience’ has been extensively written about in recent decades. It has various definitions with little global consensus about its operationalisation (Raghavan & Sandanapitchai, 2020). Deconstructing this term is beyond the scope of this research. However, Raghavan and Sandanapitchai (2020) categorised definitions into three main categories; 1) resilience as a set of traits, 2) resilience as a function of situational and contextual factors and 3) resilience as a dynamic process. Ungar (2012) critiqued research on resilience for being individualistic and Western-centric. He instead encouraged an interactional, social ecological understanding of resilience (Ungar, 2012). Ungar (2008) defined resilience as the following:

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is 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's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways. (p. 225)

This definition of resilience was used for this research and will be further explored. It is important to acknowledge that the word resilience in itself remains limiting, as so far discourse regarding resilience has been mainly shaped by Eurocentric cultures and ideas, preventing an emic understanding of the concept (Ungar et al., 2013). To minimise imposing western terminology and understandings on participants, the interview schedule did not specifically mention the word resilience, but rather asked broader questions.

## 1.5 Relevant background literature

### 1.5.1 Context

It is important to acknowledge that experiences of young refugees are situated within a context of broader international and social conflict, global capitalism, instability and inequality (Jones, 2001). This was the backdrop to the UK government's responses through policy and legislation (Jones, 2001). The context is multi-layered and cannot be fully explored in this research, but some key aspects will be highlighted.

More than 100 million people were forced to flee their homes over the past decade, reaching a record high, according to the annual UNHCR (UNHCR, 2020) Global Trends report.

Children make up an estimated 30-34 million of the total number of displaced people (UNHCR, 2020). For the year ending December 2020, 29,456 asylum applications to the UK from main applicants were reported (*Top 10 Facts from the Latest Statistics on Refugees and People Seeking Asylum - Refugee Council*, n.d.). This would have been impacted by COVID-19. Of those people, The Refugee Council (*Top 10 Facts from the Latest Statistics on*

*Refugees and People Seeking Asylum - Refugee Council, n.d.*) reported that 41% were granted protection in the UK at the first decision stage, meaning they receive five years leave to remain in the UK. For those not granted protection, this could mean a lengthy and complex appeal process that can take years to resolve (*Top 10 Facts from the Latest Statistics on Refugees and People Seeking Asylum - Refugee Council, n.d.*). During this time, asylum seekers are not permitted to work and can apply for accommodation and asylum support, which grants them £5.39 a day (Walsh, 2019).

#### 1.5.2 Legislation and policy context

Table 1 outlines some of the relevant legislation and policies that were implemented and the possible implications they had over time for refugee families:

**Table 1:** *Relevant legislation and policies and their impact*

<b>Legislation / policy</b>	<b>Context and implications</b>
1951 Geneva convention	This gave importance to the social rights of refugees in the country of asylum and thus governs the UK’s responsibilities (Hek, 2005).
Asylum and Immigration Acts (1993, 1996 and early 2000s)	Following political and media attention on immigration and asylum in the late 1980s in the UK, various Asylum and Immigration Acts were passed (Hek, 2005). These were often restrictive; they removed the rights of asylum seekers to secure social housing tenancies, cash benefits from ‘in-country’ asylum applicants or those appealing a decision and led to housing people in poor quality emergency accommodation outside of London for example (Hek, 2005). The Acts also stopped asylum seekers from accessing employment legally and stopped cash payments, introducing a new voucher system. This often left people increasingly isolated, marginalised and living in poverty.
The Children Act 1989	This placed a duty on local authorities to provide services for children ‘in need’ and protect and promote their ‘best interests’ (Hek, 2005). However, the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act removed some obligations towards refugee and asylum seeking children under the Children Act 1989 (Hek, 2005). This meant that immigration law could override considerations of child asylum seeker’s welfare (Jones, 2001).
Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016	As Home Secretary in the UK Government in 2012, Ms Theresa May announced that she would create a ‘really hostile environment’ for those deemed as illegally residing in the UK (Goodfellow, 2020). This was followed by measures brought in by these Acts, which criminalised and fined citizens who failed to enforce citizen-on-citizen checks with members of the public

	<p>(Yeo, 2018). A requirement to show immigration papers was introduced across all aspects of life; to landlords, banks, employers, for marriage and driving and for access to healthcare (Yeo, 2018). Such scrutiny and suspicion was likely to have shaped public perception towards asylum seekers and refugees entering the country, making them more likely to be viewed as burdensome. Goodfellow (2020) argues that anti-immigration politics in the UK has old roots, having been run on mistruths, hysteria and racism for decades, if not centuries.</p>
<p>Resettlement schemes</p>	<p>Following the start of the war in Syria in March 2011, the UK government’s position was that its support was best provided to Syrian refugees through contributing humanitarian aid in Syria and neighbouring countries, rather than taking part in any resettlement for refugees who had reached Europe (Karyotis, Mulvey, &amp; Sleparis, 2021). Prime Minister Mr David Cameron referred to those who attempted to reach the UK to claim asylum during this time as ‘swarms’ (ITV News, 2015). The Government eventually announced a Syrian Resettlement Programme in 2014, then following public pressure, in 2015 agreed to implement resettlement schemes (Karyotis et al., 2021). This meant that Syrian refugees would be identified outside of the UK and brought into the UK (Walsh, 2019). This was later expanded to other nationalities affected by the Syrian conflict (Walsh, 2019).</p>
<p>Refugee family reunion policy</p>	<p>Since 2014, the ‘Dublin III System’ has allowed families seeking asylum elsewhere in Europe to reunite with family seeking asylum in the UK (Alper, 2021). Unaccompanied minors were allowed to reunite with parents, legal guardians, siblings and other extended family that were deemed legally residing in the UK (Alper, 2021).</p> <p>Whilst international law acknowledges entitlement to protection, individual states are left to define the term ‘family’ (Beaton et al., 2018). Partners of adults in the UK and dependent children under the age of 18 who were part of the family prior to fleeing</p>

	<p>are able to come and live in the UK (Beaton et al., 2018). Extended family, or children above the age of 18, no matter how dependent on family members are not included in the definition of family in the UK (Beaton et al., 2018).</p>
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*The UK leaving the European Union (EU)*

It is argued that vilifying immigrants played an important role in the EU referendum campaign and emboldened the enactment of white nationalist sentiments (Mandaville, 2017). Implementing tighter exclusionary borders was central to Brexit with expressed desires to ‘take back control’ for Britain to regain its autonomous sovereignty and avoid responsibilities that come with belonging to a global community (Abbas, 2019).

An increase in far-right campaigns against perceived ‘Islamisation’ of Britain meant that issues of immigration, the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ and terrorism were conflated and encouraged more resentment towards minoritized ethnic groups and particularly Muslims (Abbas, 2019). It is therefore important to consider the meeting of intersecting identities of race, religion, ethnicity and various other identities of young refugees and the broader and embedded discourses, legislation and policies that surround them in the UK.

### 1.5.3 Mental health and refugees; the trauma narrative

It is argued that by their very definition, refugees would have been exposed to severe trauma and stress before, during and after fleeing their country of origin (Lambert & Alhassoon, 2015). The literature often refers to three stages of traumatic experiences that it suggests most refugees are exposed to, as summarised by Fazel and Stein (2002);

- 1) In their country of origin, experiencing war and witnessing violence and torture, losing family and friends, having education disrupted and impacted by parental distress.
- 2) On the journey to a country of refuge, refugees may be exposed to more life-threatening dangers. Due to tightening immigration controls, young refugees may be placed into hands of smugglers to ensure their escape.

- 3) On arriving in another country, additional stressors often take place in proving asylum claims and trying to navigate a new country – this has been referred to as a period of ‘secondary trauma’. In addition, they can be exposed to unsafe or problematic living conditions, lack of access to schooling, insecurity with an unstable status, parental illness and unemployment and social exclusion (Hebebrand et al., 2016).

Most of the research that explores mental health of refugee populations has focused on the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Nickerson et al., 2011). For refugee youth, prevalence rates of PTSD have ranged between 19% and 54% (Frounfelker et al., 2020).

#### *Deconstructing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*

PTSD has been critiqued for being a Western construct, born out of an individualist biomedical framework (Bracken et al., 1995). This culturally Western view of mental illness places the individual as the unit of study (Bracken et al, 1995), and places the problem within them, being incomplete emotional and cognitive processing (Bracken et al., 1995). It is argued that such view is fundamentally different from other cultures’ possible explanations of illness, which may refer to intrapsychic, somatic processes, supernatural forces or social relations as causes of distress (Bracken et al., 1995), making it less valid cross-culturally.

Another major critique of the construct in the context of refugees is that it arguably does not attend to contextual causes of distress and pathologizes normal reactions to catastrophic situations of trauma, loss and deprivation (Joseph & Williams, 2005). Doing so risks positioning refugees as vulnerable; alienating and further disempowering people rather than attending adequately to their strengths (Hughes, 2014). The result is that professionals

conceptualise refugee people with a deficit or pathology framework and this view becomes so widespread that it permeates society's social fabric (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012).

Furthermore, it has also been pointed out that the construct of PTSD and its evidence base for treatment has been developed and trialled with Western survivors of discrete traumatic events, such as a road traffic accident or assault (Nickerson et al., 2011). Indeed, most of trauma literature is based on designs that measure PTSD from an 'etic' perspective, that is, by interpreting from an outsider's perspective rather than a cultural insider (Rasmussen et al., 2014). Such Western understanding and assessment tools have therefore been questioned for their utility in application with refugee people and it has been argued that issues of social, political and cultural realities ought to be central to trauma approaches with refugee populations (Bracken et al., 1995).

In addition, the trauma narrative has been criticised for defining refugees by their past experience alone, based on Eurocentric norms and values, and thus overlooking the stigma, isolation and rejection they experience in the host country (Muecke, 1992). It has been argued that relating their distress to past trauma has deemed refugee people 'too complex' to work with therapeutically, and positioned them to need specialist psychological interventions (Vara & Patel, 2012). Such unquestioned use of Eurocentric psychological and research approaches are thought to contribute to the subjugation of people, including refugee people, and perpetuates a particular production of knowledge and potential abuse of power (Vara & Patel, 2012).

#### 1.5.4 Refugees accessing mental health services

There is some consensus in the literature that despite the reported increased risk of suffering from serious mental health problems for refugees, they are under-represented in mental health services (Colucci et al., 2017). Some have suggested that this is predominantly due to a lack of knowledge, and stigma related to mental health (Ndikumana, 2019). This has been explained by several factors, including language barriers, differences in symptom expression, discrepancies in expectations, lack of awareness, stigma and cultural differences in help-seeking (Satinsky et al., 2019). Structural barriers such as finances, language proficiency or unstable housing and barriers specific to the refugee experience, such as immigration status and a lack of trust in authority have also been highlighted (Byrow et al., 2020).

It is thought that clinicians can find it more challenging to conduct assessments in mental health services given cultural differences in expressing symptoms and differences in explanatory models, expectations of help and coping strategies (Baarnhielm, 2016).

Following on from the last section, it could be said here that there is an underlying assumption that mental health services in their current form are what is needed for young refugees.

#### *Current evidence-based interventions and guidance for working with refugees*

There are no specific guidelines of trauma approaches for refugee populations that feature in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. The guidelines then focus on the treatment of people diagnosed with PTSD. They refer to possible cultural challenges to recognising psychological consequences of trauma and recommend ensuring screening, assessment and treatment of people diagnosed with PTSD is culturally and linguistically appropriate, with a suggestion of the use of interpreters or giving a choice of

therapists (NICE, 2018). They recommend eight to 12 sessions of individual trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for adults diagnosed with acute stress disorder or clinically important symptoms of PTSD (including cognitive processing therapy, cognitive therapy, narrative exposure therapy and prolonged exposure therapy) (NICE, 2018). NICE (2018) also recommends considering Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) following a non-combat related trauma if there is a preference for it.

For individuals with additional needs, including a diagnosis of complex PTSD, NICE (2018) recommends building extra time to develop trust and consider safety and stability of their circumstances as well as help with any possible barriers to engagement such as substance misuse.

A phased model of intervention (Herman, 1992) is often implemented which focuses on the phases of safety and stabilisation, processing of traumatic memory and re-integration into family and community, which can be followed flexibly. The British Psychological Society (BPS) (2017) has also published specific guidance for working with refugees. It outlines guidance for supporting adults, children, young people and unaccompanied minors as well as nurseries, schools and colleges and supporting families and communities (British Psychological Society, 2017).

#### 1.5.5 The paradigm shift to resilience

In response to criticism regarding Western models of illness pathologizing young refugees' responses to stressors, some research has instead focused on emphasising young refugee resilience in the face of adversity (Pacione et al., 2013). Such research aims to establish which pathways lead to positive adjustment and development (Sleijpen et al., 2016) to

identify useful avenues for prevention and intervention (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). This has often led to a search for ‘promotive’ and ‘protective’ factors that may exist alongside risk factors.

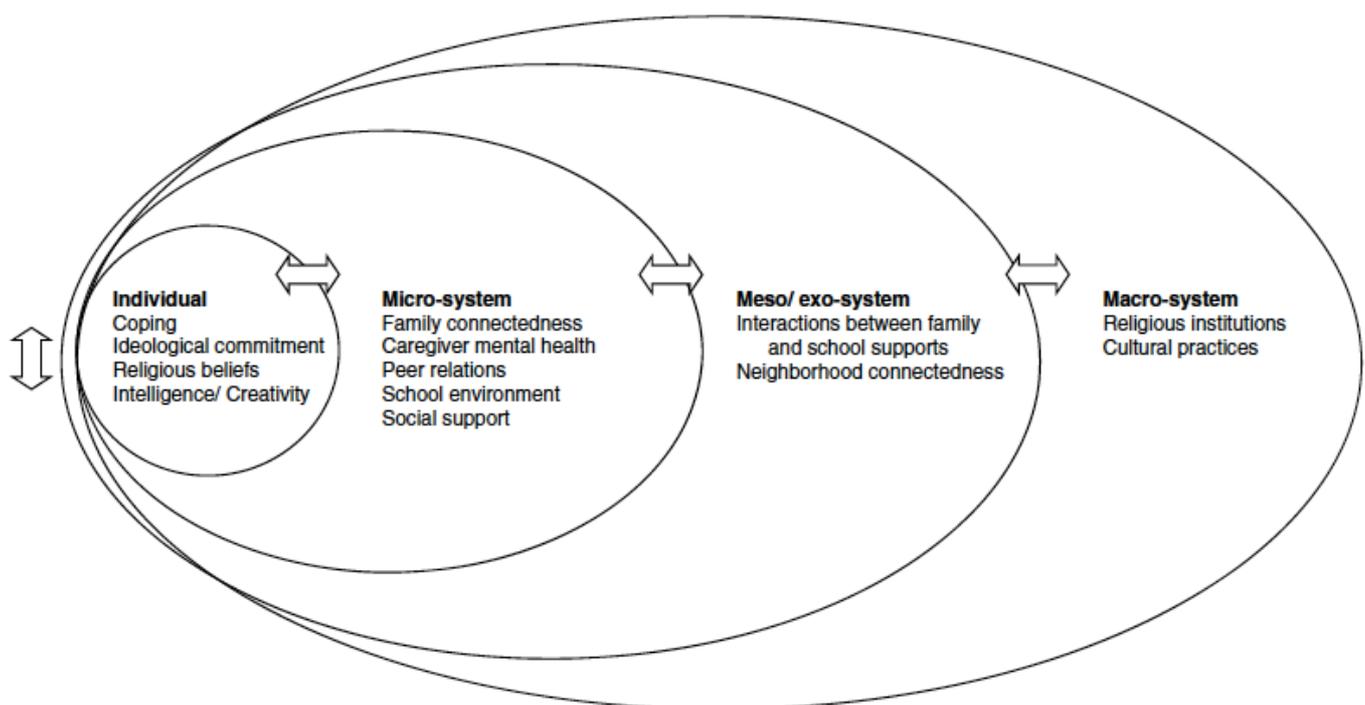
However, as mentioned previously, the challenge for research in this area has been the wide array of definitions for the term ‘resilience’ and variations in how it is operationalised. The ability to generalise to other cultures has been called into question together with the Western understanding and instruments used to conceptualise it (Ungar, 2012). This has led to a leaning towards qualitative approaches to explore unnamed sources of resilience relevant for people (Sleijpen, et al., 2016). This avoids a reductionist binary view of resilience, wherein people are labelled as either resilient or not based on a specific understanding of resilience.

In addition, despite a shift towards resilience, literature has mostly focused on individual attributes rather than external factors that support resilience (Bonanno, 2004). Some have stressed the need, particularly when considering children’s resilience, that we must look beyond the individual’s characteristics alone and explore promotive factors within their family, community and society (Pieloch et al., 2016).

There has also been an acknowledgement that resilience is more complex than a simple mathematical addition of risk and protective factors, but rather a complex dynamic process that involves an interaction between time-variant and context-dependent variables (Tol et al., 2013), which requires a dynamic multilevel lens (Pieloch et al., 2016)

### *Relevant theoretical models*

The social ecological theory and model of resilience (Ungar, 2012) is thought to recognise such complexity, and is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory which views people as embedded in interdependent micro to macro-level systems, which influence them (Theron et al., 2015). This accounts for the proximal environment such as family, neighbourhood, peers and school as well as the more distal cultural and social value systems that impact resilience (Ungar, 2012). The idea is that values, morals and cultural beliefs would determine the meaningfulness of resources that promote resilience. It also considers how there is a dynamic and continual transaction between an individual and their contexts (Ungar, 2012).



**Figure 1:** A social ecological framework of resilience for children in conflict settings from Tol et al. (in press) as cited in Ungar (2012).

### *Post-traumatic growth (PTG)*

Another area of research that has been explored is that relating to PTG. PTG, differentiated from resilience, has been referred to as:

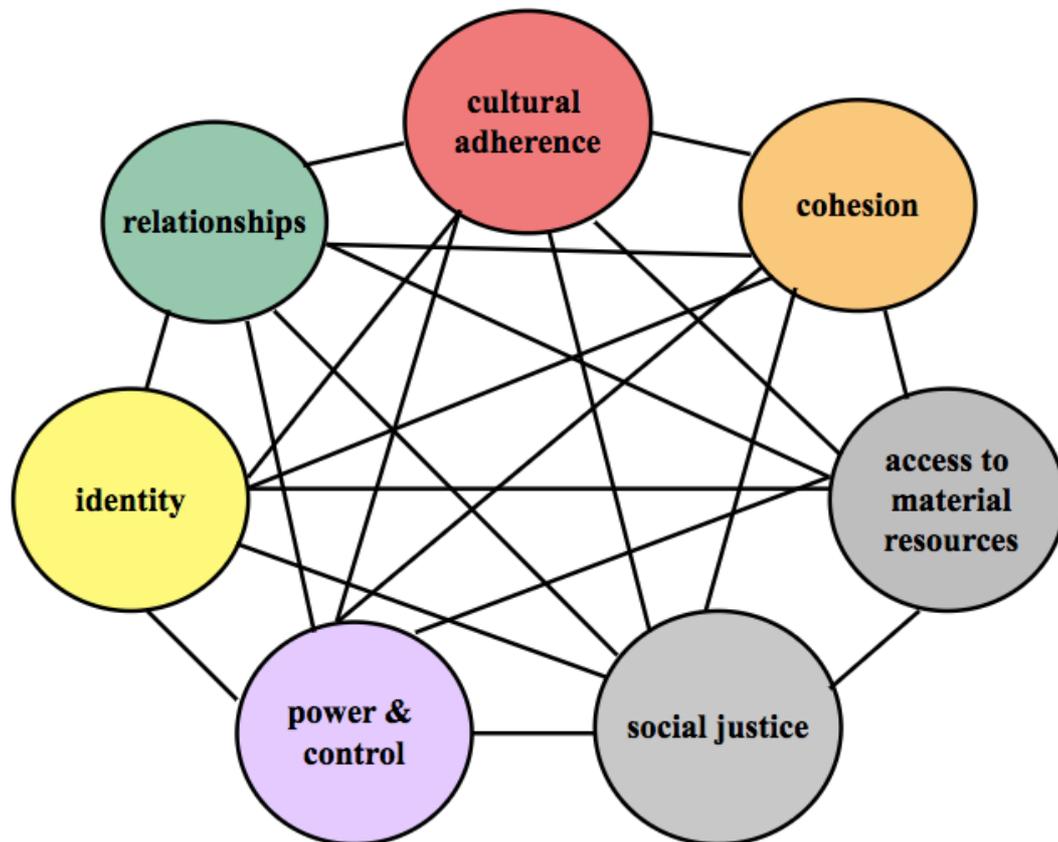
“a change in people that goes beyond an ability to resist and not be damaged by highly stressful circumstances; it involves a movement beyond pre-trauma levels of adaptation.” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). It has a quality of transformation that can manifest in five areas; as improved relationships, an increased sense of personal strength, a reshuffling of life priorities and a richer existential and spiritual life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Looking at the concept with refugee populations, themes of social support, coping styles, religiosity and hope and optimism have been identified as precursors to PTG (Chan et al., 2016). Research, though still growing in this area, has been critiqued for primarily focusing on the individual rather than whole communities (Chan et al., 2016), and giving limited considerations to the role of culture and broader context (Sutton et al., 2006).

#### *Adversity Activated Development (AAD)*

A similar concept is ‘Adversity Activated Development’ (AAD), which refers to positive developments that directly result from being exposed to adversity (Papadopoulos, 2001). Papadopoulos (2001) applies this concept in the context of adversity refugees have experienced, stating that once they have survived the initial life-threatening adversity, they may begin to appreciate life. He differentiates AAD from PTG in that AAD assumes exposure to adversity, rather than being traumatised per se, and may apply whilst someone is experiencing further adversity (Papadopoulos, 2001). The assumption is that adversity can push people to a limit that opens them up to new horizons that may never have been imagined, which triggers new perceptions of self, relationships and one’s meaning and purpose (Papadopoulos, 2001).

Ungar (2008) explored contextual and culturally determined indicators of resilience through an International Resilience Project. He suggested seven tensions are at play in the lives of young people, and resilience is understood as the contextually dependent optimal resolution

of such tensions. The seven tensions, as shown in Figure 2, are 1) access to material resources, 2) relationships, 3) identity, 4) power and control, 5) cultural adherence, 6) social justice and 7) cohesion.



**Figure 2:** The Seven tensions<sup>1</sup>

He concluded that resilience is a culturally and contextually sensitive construct that warrants participatory and culturally embedded ways of capturing the nuances of culture and context (Ungar, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> From Social ecology of resilience: families, communities and service providers. In <https://slideplayer.com/slide/10438193/>.

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## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Systematic Literature Review

This chapter presents a systematic literature review (SLR) regarding what is known about young refugee resilience and presents a rationale for the current research.

#### 2.1.1 Aims

The sections above have outlined a general context regarding young refugee resilience, including theoretical concepts, models and empirical evidence. They have also critically discussed language and concepts applied to young refugees. They have not, however, provided an in-depth understanding of what promotes young refugee resilience, according to the literature. This will therefore be explored through a systematic review of the literature to-date. Systematic literature reviews retrieve, appraise and summarise all available research in answer to a question (White & Schmidt, 2005). The question this SLR aimed to answer was: *What promotes young refugee resilience?*

#### 2.1.2 Review methodology

##### 2.1.2.1 Search Strategy

A systematic literature search was conducted between March 2021 and May 2021. The following databases were searched: Scopus, PsycArticles, PubMed and Social Care Online. The final search terms used in the search are listed in Table 2 below.

**Table 2:** *Final search terms*

<b>Concept 1</b>	Young	<b>OR</b>	Adolescen* OR teen* OR youth
<b>AND</b>			
<b>Concept 2</b>	Refugee*	<b>OR</b>	Asylum seek* OR displaced people
<b>AND</b>			
<b>Concept 3</b>	Resilien*	<b>OR</b>	Cope OR "post-traumatic growth" OR "posttraumatic growth" OR wellbeing OR "protective factors" OR well-being OR thrive

Initially, search terms were kept broad to maximise the opportunities to find relevant articles.

Specific search terms were eliminated which were found not to yield relevant results, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** *Eliminated search terms and concepts*

<b>Search concepts and terms</b>	<b>Reasons eliminated</b>
Concept 4: Promot* (with alternative keywords 'support*', 'enhanc*', 'develop*', 'leads to', 'contribut* to', 'enable*', 'determin*', 'facilitat*', 'help*' and 'foster*')	Too general, making this concept not easily searchable
The term 'adapt*' from concept 3	Yielded results related to adapted symptom questionnaires
The term 'manage' from concept 3	Produced results more related to physical health and migration management policies
The term 'teen' from concept 1	Did not produce papers that the terms 'adolescen*' and 'youth' did not produce
The terms 'resistance' and 'sumud' (a 'culturally valued concept that underpins resilience for Palestinians' (Hammad & Tribe, 2020, p. 2))	Initially included but did not produce relevant papers that differed from those that the term 'resilien*' produced

Terms were added by looking at 'key terms' used in relevant papers identified during the search process. For example, the terms ““posttraumatic growth”” and ““protective factors”” were added in this way.

### 2.1.2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

**Table 4:** *Inclusion and exclusion criteria for SLR*

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Published in peer reviewed journals	Published in non peer-reviewed journals
Participants aged between 10 and 24	Participants outside of age 10-24 age bracket
Refugees and asylum seekers	Internally displaced people
Published in the last 10 years (2011 – 2021)	Not published between 2011-2021
Outcomes of empirical study measuring positive outcomes	Outcomes of empirical study focus solely on reduction of symptoms or risk factors
Term ‘resilience’ in title / abstract / key terms	No mention of term ‘resilience’ in title / abstract / key terms
Written in English	Theoretical or reflective papers
	Grey literature

The specified age bracket of ten to 24 was selected based on the World Health Organisation (2021) definition for ‘young people’. In line with the above-described paradigm shift to a ‘resilience focus’ rather than a pathology focus, the inclusion criteria specified that papers needed to explore what leads to ‘positive outcomes’ rather than only what lessens symptoms. However, in addition to this, due to the multiple and broad definitions of resilience, the author also chose to include papers that opted to use the word ‘resilience’, regardless of their definition.

The initial search using the search terms yielded over 13,000 papers. Using database filtering functions, searches were then filtered to papers published in the last ten years. Irrelevant subject areas were excluded and the search was filtered by age range and language. This left

2,739 articles. The PRISMA flow chart (Moher et al., 2009) in Figure 3 outlines the process of selection of papers from this point.

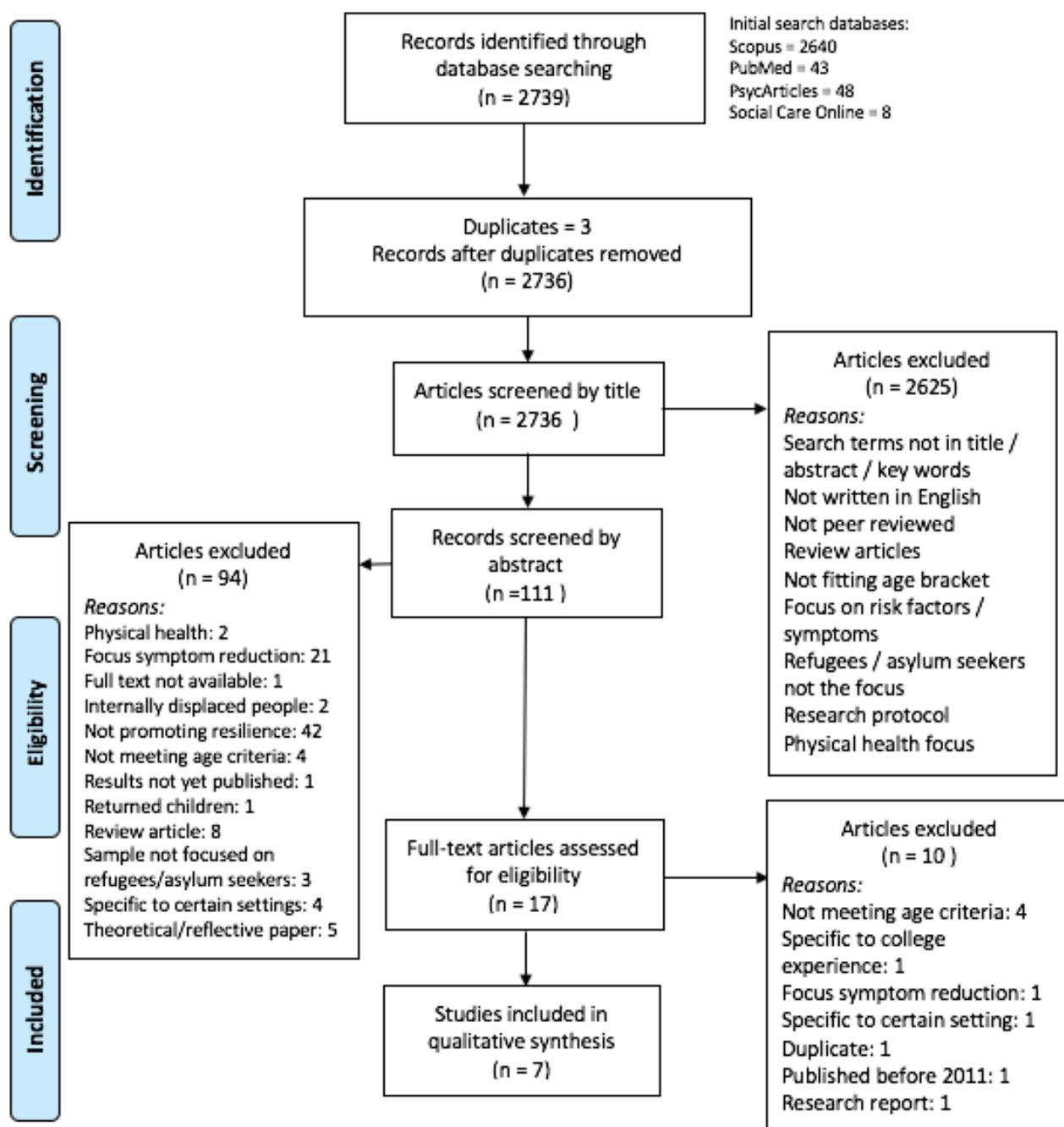


Figure 3: Systematic Literature Review flowchart

Having started the initial search with thousands of results, only seven papers met the inclusion criteria. It was noted that many articles that were not directly focused on promotion of resilience tended to focus instead on increasing help-seeking and barriers to help-seeking. This possibly reflects wider assumptions in the literature about what is assumed to be ‘best’ for refugee populations, based on a Western understanding. These were excluded for the purpose of answering the specific question of this SLR.

### *2.1.2.3 Synthesis method*

To synthesise the findings of the final seven papers selected in the process, a ‘thematic synthesis’ approach (Thomas & Harden, 2008) was drawn on together with a collection of core standards and principles for conducting systematic reviews, as discussed by Siddaway et al. (2019). The process involved reading and re-reading the papers, and then noting ‘key concepts’ identified from each paper (Campbell et al., 2003), which the researcher considered to be the main themes. These key concepts became the raw data for synthesis. Descriptive themes were constructed from comparing data and these were made into analytical themes through relating them to the SLR question. The process is outlined in Appendix A.

### *2.1.3 Synthesis findings*

Seven papers were selected for synthesising through the process of the SLR. Two were conducted in the UK (Groark et al., 2011; Sutton, 2006<sup>2</sup>), one in the Republic of Ireland (Ní Raghallaigh, 2011), one in the USA (Bennouna et al., 2019), one in the Netherlands (Sleijpen et al., 2017), one in Sweden (Thommessen et al., 2015) and one in Malta (Spiteri, 2012).

Methodologically, all studies were qualitative in design. Five employed the methodology of semi-structured interviews; one used both semi-structured interviews and focus groups and

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<sup>2</sup> This paper was included despite being outside of the 10 year review window as the researcher had initially mistakenly understood that it was published in 2015.

one used ethnographic case study in-depth interviews. Three analysed data using IPA, two used GT, one used TA and one used a combination of GT and DA. Sample sizes ranged from six to 57, the latter used focus group discussions. Five of the seven studies specifically focused on experiences of unaccompanied minors. Only two of the studies (Sleijpen et al, 2017; Ni Raghallaigh, 2011) specifically set out to explore 'resilience' in their aims, the remaining used other terms and concepts.

A summary of the studies and their findings can be found in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Summary of the findings of the Systematic Literature Review

<i>Authors (Year)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Participants and duration of stay in host country</i>	<i>Research Methodology</i>	<i>Conceptualisation of resilience</i>	<i>Summary of study and key findings</i>	<i>Strengths and limitations</i>
Bennouna C., Ocampo M.G., Cohen F., Basir M., Allaf C., Wessells M., Stark L. (2019)	Ecologies of care: Mental health and psychosocial support for war- affected youth in the U.S.	30 youths (age 13- 23) from Iraq, Syria and Sudan now living in USA.  30 caregivers and 27 key informants were also interviewed (teachers, administrators, service providers and personnel from community- based organisations).  <b>Duration of stay:</b> not specified; participants born in conflict-affected country or during family’s displacement	Focus Groups with the youth and semi-structured interviews with the caregivers and key informants  Analysis: Thematic Analysis	Using Bioecological Theory of Human Development	Study aimed to identify common challenges and forms of support that adolescent newcomers from the MENA region and their families encounter.  Findings show that participants adapted readily to their new environment and engaged with a rich ecosystem of supports, starting at home and extending through their schools and communities. The findings demonstrate the critical importance of system-wide support mechanisms that coordinate efforts of actors at every level to work in tandem.	<b>Strengths:</b> Collation of data from different sources allowing for triangulation of data. Interpreters included from point of contacting participants. In addition, participants were asked their own definitions of support, which prevented the imposition of specific (Western) concepts. Multidisciplinary team of coders recruited and trained, adding to study rigour.  <b>Limitations:</b> Recruitment via school districts and community organisations meant that they recruited families who are likely to have received the greatest support, rather than those who may have received less support and may offer different insights. No exploration of culture- specific resources. No mention of member- checking or researcher reflexivity.

<p><i>Thommessen S.A.O., Corcoran P., Todd B.K. (2015)</i></p>	<p>Experiences of arriving to Sweden as an unaccompanied asylum-seeking minor from Afghanistan: An interpretative phenomenological analysis</p>	<p>6 male refugees from Afghanistan aged 18-19, living in Sweden.</p> <p><b>Duration of stay:</b> Not specified; inclusion criteria specified that participants would have received refugee status</p>	<p>Individual semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</p>	<p>Not explicitly defined</p>	<p>Study explored how a group of male refugees from Afghanistan experienced arriving to the Swedish host-society as unaccompanied minors and how they perceived support available to them.</p> <p>Four main themes were identified; From Danger to Safety, Living in Limbo, Guidance and Social Support and Striving to Fit in and Move Forward</p>	<p><b>Strengths:</b> Interpreter present from the start. Themes are supported by several participant quotes in the data. The authors paid close attention to ethical considerations and relationship to researcher (e.g., pressure to express favourable views about host country considered).</p> <p><b>Limitations:</b> Data only includes those who had received refugee status and not those who had their application refused, so caution is required in interpreting results. Acknowledgement of interpretation of researcher but no elaboration on how this was managed, particularly for IPA</p>
<p><i>Sleijpen M., Mooren T., Kleber R.J., Boeije H.R. (2017)</i></p>	<p>Lives on hold: A qualitative study of young refugees' resilience strategies</p>	<p>16 treatment-seeking refugees aged 13-21, living in the Netherlands; 8 from the Middle East, 5 from Africa, 2 from Eastern Europe and 1 from Asia</p> <p><b>Duration of stay:</b> average length of stay 4.9 years</p>	<p>Individual semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Analysis: Grounded Theory</p>	<p>'A process of adapting well in the face of adversity (stress/traumatic events), not the absence of pathology' with use of social ecological framework</p>	<p>The study aimed to identify factors and processes that according to young refugees promote their resilience in the face of challenges.</p> <p>Four resilience strategies were identified; 1) acting autonomously, 2) performing at school, 3) perceiving support from peers and parents and 4)</p>	<p><b>Strengths:</b> Participants were invited to define resilience for themselves and share what mattered to them and their culture. Topic guide developed with colleagues and youth team. A multidisciplinary team analysed the data, allowing opportunity for reflexivity.</p> <p><b>Limitations:</b> Participants were recruited from a mental</p>

		(range 1-11 years)			participating in the new society. Authors conclude that resilience is a dynamic process that is both context and time-specific.	health institute having requested support, which may skew the findings. No discussion of ethical consideration beyond approval. No mention of member checking
<i>Ni Raghallaigh M. (2011)</i>	Religion in the lives of unaccompanied minors: An available and compelling coping resource	18 females and 14 males were interviewed. Participants came from thirteen different countries (mainly Eastern Africa and Western Africa). Their ages ranged between 14 and 19. Twenty-three were Christian and nine were Muslim.  <b>Duration of stay:</b> Not specified. Author says it was various lengths of time.	Participant observation in a hostel where participants live and semi-structured interviews  Analysis: Grounded Theory	Not explicitly defined	Study’s focus was to explore the experiences of unaccompanied minors living in Ireland beginning from a strengths perspective and focusing on their abilities and resilience.  It was found that religion was a ‘relatively available’ and ‘relatively compelling’ way for participants to deal with challenges. Practising faith and religion served as a source of continuity and represented something familiar in a largely unfamiliar context. It also provided them with a sense of meaning, comfort and an increased sense of control.	<b>Strengths:</b> Method and broader discussions allowed for organically following what participants deemed important to them. Heterogenous sample. Study outlines practical steps from the results that could be immediately implemented.  <b>Limitations:</b> Very little written about the interview questions asked and the data analysis process. No mention of researcher’s relationship with the topic or the impact such factors may have had on the research. No mention of member checking or conferring of codes with other researchers. Little mention of ethical considerations.
<i>Spiteri D. (2012)</i>	The Evolving Identities of Unaccompanied Young Male Asylum Seekers in Malta	12 male unaccompanied minor asylum seekers in Malta aged 16-17. Participants were	Qualitative ethnographic case-study. In-depth interviews	Not explicitly defined	The study looked to explore how language served to frame the young people’s ideas of themselves, their travels, and their lives.	<b>Strengths:</b> Analysis process steps presented in detail. Bringing together of two methodologies gives more opportunity to analyse the data.

		<p>from Ethiopia, Somalia and Nigeria.</p> <p><b>Duration of stay:</b> Not specified. Author describes participants to be 'in transition'</p>	<p>Analysis: Combination of Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis.</p>		<p>The study discussed the notion of 'being at one with myself' as a social aspect of self-hood shaped by other migrants who give one another hope. In addition, communal aspects of relationships were found to allow them to acquire a deeper sense of meaning and purpose, reinforcing hope in a better present and better future, used as a coping strategy in different contexts.</p>	<p><b>Limitations:</b> Despite stating that some participants were less conversant in English than others, no interpreters were involved. No mention of self-reflexivity or consideration of power dynamics. No mention of ethical consideration or member checking. Little explanation of how the two methodologies came together.</p>
<p><i>Groark C., Sclare I., Raval H. (2011)</i></p>	<p>Understanding the experiences and emotional needs of unaccompanied adolescents in the UK</p>	<p>6 unaccompanied asylum-seeking adolescents aged 16-18 in an inner-city borough in the UK. There were 4 male and 2 female participants. Five came from countries in Africa and one came from Asia.</p> <p><b>Duration of stay:</b> At least six months</p>	<p>Semi-structured interview</p> <p>Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)</p>	<p>Not explicitly defined</p>	<p>The study aimed to explore the experiences of young unaccompanied asylum seekers in the UK, the impacts on their psychological wellbeing and also what psychological processes they use to manage or cope with the difficulties they experience.</p> <p>Four main themes developed from the transcripts; loss, negotiating a new life, experiences of distress and process of adjustment.</p>	<p><b>Strengths:</b> Interview developed through reviewing the literature, discussion with professionals and with one young asylum seeker. Steps of study process clearly outlined, including evidence of self-reflexivity and respondent validation presented. Additional scales were used to triangulate the data.</p> <p><b>Limitations:</b> No explicit exploration of cultural understanding or coping strategies. The scales used to measure symptoms are Western tools that may not be sensitive to cultural differences.</p>

<p><i>Sutton, V., Robbins, I., Senior, V., Gordon, S. (2006)</i></p>	<p>A qualitative study exploring refugee minors' personal accounts of post-traumatic growth and positive change processes in adapting to life in the UK</p>	<p>8 young people who sought asylum as unaccompanied minors. 7 were female and 1 was male.</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews  Analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)</p>	<p>Not explicitly defined but study explores 'post-traumatic growth and positive change processes'</p>	<p>This study aimed to explore how unaccompanied minors have actively constructed their experiences of trauma and the important meanings they have attached to these experiences that have led to positive changes and feelings of growth in the face of so much adversity.</p>	<p><b>Strengths:</b> Rationale for method of analysis helpfully provided. Self-reflexivity present. Credibility checks by colleagues took place for verification of identified themes.</p>
		<p>Participants were recruited from two social services departments.</p>			<p>Four main themes reported; 1) The impact of trauma (search for meaning and dislocation and loss), 2) variables influencing the process of positive change (social support, activity and religion), 3) Positive outcomes (positive change in life perception and desire to live a purposive life. 4) Dissonance (co-existence of ongoing distress and positive changes and mismatch between internal feeling state and external presentation).</p>	<p><b>Limitations:</b> No discussion of ethical considerations beyond ethical approval. It is unclear which countries/areas of the world participants came from. No exploration of culturally informed coping strategies. No mention of member checking of results. Owned one's own perspective but no mention of how this may have impacted the data.</p>
		<p><b>Duration of stay:</b> not specified</p>				

The following themes presented in Table 6 were constructed from the synthesis:

**Table 6:** *Themes from synthesis of findings of SLR*

<b>Theme 1</b>	Multiple levels of support required
<b>Theme 2</b>	Adjustment to new country
<b>Subtheme</b>	<i>Autonomy and control</i>
<b>Theme 3</b>	Supportive friendships
<b>Theme 4</b>	Education as the key
<b>Theme 5</b>	Importance of religion

***Theme 1: Multiple levels of support required***

All studies discussed multiple levels of provision and utilisation of support for young refugees, with two studies emphasising the importance of the interplay between different support systems (Bennouna et al., 2019; Thommessen et al., 2015). Bennouna et al. (2019) used the bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to describe key actors in an individual's social ecologies: families, peers, schools and communities. The study concludes that by working together, these key agents can create an environment central to newcomers' adaptation and sense of belonging. Sleijpen et al. (2017), using GT, also showed that the four resilience strategies young refugees adopted were dynamic and interacted together, dependent on time, context, and available support systems. The remaining studies alluded to multiple levels and sources of support in their findings, which will be further elaborated on in the following themes. This might suggest that the conceptualisation of resilience in these studies leans mostly towards the second category discussed in Section 1.4; resilience as a function of situational and contextual factors. Two studies may have leaned towards the definition in the third category, resilience as a dynamic process. None seemed to define the idea or concept as a set of internal traits, which might

reflect a shift in defining the concept of resilience in the literature over the years. Whilst studies acknowledged the multiple conceptualisations of the term, only two defined resilience, which made the process of comparison between studies less straight-forward.

### ***Theme 2: Adjustment to new country***

Most studies referred to the need for young refugees to adjust and adapt to their new context. Groark et al (2011) described how participants attempted to negotiate a new way of life in the UK. This included making comparisons between their home country and the UK and was influenced by how they felt others evaluated them (Groark et al., 2011).

For participants interviewed by Thommessen et al. (2015), adjustment signified fitting into society through learning about its rules and norms or through education. For Ni Raghalleigh (2011), this involved negotiating a different religious culture by making active choices to adapt their faith to their new context. In Spiteri (2012), adaptation was talked about in tandem with an evolving identity mediated by engaging in interpersonal relationships to be ‘one with themselves’ in a new country. This highlights how multifaceted and subjective adjustment and adaptation to a new country are, but also how these have been identified to be processes.

### ***Subtheme: Autonomy and control***

In all but two papers, autonomy and control were indicated to be important in promoting resilience for young refugees. For some participants this was linked with a sense of pride and confidence they developed from having had to deal with difficulties independently (Sleijpen et al., 2017). Having personal control therefore seemed important to these participants (Sleijpen et al., 2017).

Ni Raghallaigh (2011) also found an increased sense of control to be important for participants, this time in the context of their relationships with and belief in God. Similarly to the Sleijpen et al. (2017) study, Spiteri (2012) reported that it was important to participants to appreciate how far they have made it, giving them determination to go further and reinforcing a sense that they can actively shape their lives and relationships. Self-efficacy was seen to be a recurring outcome of all three variables influencing the process of positive change according to Sutton et al. (2006); social support, activity and religion. Groark et al. (2011) linked 'trying to gain control', which was a strong theme for five of six of their participants, to a direct reaction of their experience of lacking control in their lives. The way they did this was through education, gaining knowledge and striving to succeed in education to change their 'status' legally and socially. These studies seemed to suggest that a sense of control could be gained through an appreciation of one's own accomplishments and through relationships, or through achievement in education, which is the next theme to be discussed.

### ***Theme 3: Education as the key***

For four of the seven studies, education was recognised to be an important factor for young refugees. Three of the studies described education as a vehicle to something highly important to them; a way to adapt to the new society (Thommessen et al., 2015), a 'key to a better future' (Sleijpen et al., 2017) and a 'way out' of current lives and disempowered positions (Groark et al., 2011). In only one study was this linked with the family's values (Bennouna et al., 2019). However, education in school was more than a steppingstone for some young refugees. It also acted as a distraction and source of social contacts for some (Sleijpen et al., 2017), as demonstrated by this participant quote:

I know that school is my only rock. I feel good when I get good grades. At school, I forget everything. When I'm at home, I think no, no, no, fortunately school is there too. Sometimes I complain though, getting up early and stuff, but if there was no school, what would we do?

Life has certain policies, guidelines and in your youth you need to go to school and I do it with pleasure. (P13, 18 years old) (P. 355)

This shows another example of the multiple meanings given and different ways education promotes resilience.

#### ***Theme 4: Supportive friendships and peer groups***

Friendships and peer groups featured often in the papers. As with the other themes discussed, they seemed to have differing roles and functions for young refugees. In some instances, friendships played a key role in orienting and supporting the adjustment of young refugees to their new schools (Bennouna et al., 2019). Friends and peer groups also supported participants to overcome language barriers and microaggressions and gradually created a sense of belonging. For participants in this study, supportive friends showed interest in learning about them and their background, did not laugh at or judge them and stood up for them when they were bullied (Bennouna et al., 2019).

Two of the studies emphasised the importance of friendships with youth with shared experiences (Thommessen et al., 2015; Sutton et al., 2006). The authors linked this with the need for social support with families and lives left behind (Thommessen et al., 2015).

For those interviewed by Sutton et al. (2006), the role of being with people who were managing well after surviving similar traumatic events seemed to generate new goals and possibilities for their futures, through comparing their lives. Social support was found to be an important variable which influenced the process of change on several levels: helping participants process the trauma by talking, receiving validating responses, developing greater self-esteem and comparing experiences to appreciate their own strength (Sutton et al., 2006).

In contrast, Sleijpen et al. (2017) described the importance of perceived support from peers, highlighting the aspect of having peers from different cultural backgrounds. The authors emphasised the role of peer groups providing support, distraction, and fun (Sleijpen et al., 2017). Distraction and avoiding difficult feelings were also the function of being with friends as described by Groark et al. (2011). This allowed participants to be in the ‘here and now’ and forget the difficulties of the past and uncertainty of the future (Groark et al., 2011). The role of friends was described to be a dominant theme for all six participants in this study (Groark et al., 2011). Similarly to Bennouna et al. (2019), for two of six participants interviewed by Groark et al. (2011), friendships were a source of advice and guide on how to ‘fit in’. Distraction was also highlighted in relation to activity, in the context of social support, in the study by Sutton et al (2006).

### ***Theme 5: Importance of religion***

Four of the studies spoke about the importance of religion in supporting young refugees. This also seemed to have a role in distraction for participants in the study by Sleijpen et al. (2017), alongside providing support and guidance. Similarly, it also provided guidance for participants interviewed by Sutton et al. (2006) as well as social support and meeting their emotional needs. One study started by generally exploring experiences of unaccompanied minors from a strengths perspective then proceeded to focus solely on religion, as it was brought up so frequently (Ní Raghallaigh, 2011b). Religion was described to provide meaning, continuity, comfort, and an increased sense of control (Ní Raghallaigh, 2011b). Spiteri (2012) discussed how religion was not only a coping strategy for participants, but something they took pride in.

It is interesting to note how many of the roles and functions that religion provided overlaps with other themes discussed. It seems that there is significant overlap between themes constructed in this synthesis, which perhaps reflects the interconnection of factors and support systems discussed earlier.

#### 2.1.4 Quality check and critique of findings

Tracy's Eight 'Big Tent' Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research (Tracy, 2010) were used to appraise the quality of each of the seven papers selected in the SLR. The quality assessed is based on eight criteria: worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010). This framework was chosen for its wide applicability to qualitative research and ability to assess different theoretical frameworks (Gordon & Patterson, 2013).

A summary table of the quality appraisal can be found in Table 7.

**Table 7:** *Systematic Literature Review Quality Appraisal*

✓✓= High Quality ✓= Criteria met ?=Unclear if criteria met ✗= Criteria not met								
Author and year published	Worthy Topic	Rich rigour	Sincerity	Credibility	Resonance	Significant contribution	Ethics	Meaningful coherence
Bennouna C., Ocampo M.G., Cohen F., Basir M., Allaf C., Wessells M., Stark L. (2019)	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Thommessen S.A.O., Corcoran P., Todd B.K. (2015)	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Sleijpen M., Mooren T., Kleber R.J., Boeije H.R. (2017)	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Ní Raghallaigh M. (2011)	✓✓	✓	✗	?	✓	✓✓	?	✓
Spiteri D. (2012)	✓✓	?	✗	?	✓	✓	?	✓
Groark C., Sclare I., Raval H. (2011)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Sutton, V. et al (2006)	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓

It is noteworthy that the papers from the SLR results were all qualitative. It is likely that papers using a quantitative or mixed methods design were excluded for measuring outcomes related to psychopathology rather than ‘positive’ outcomes. This was also an issue that Marley and Mauki (2019) noted in their systematic review of quantitative literature regarding young refugee resilience. They found that only two of 11 papers reviewed used measures of resilience explicitly focused on positive outcomes whilst the others used measures linked with psychopathology (Marley & Mauki, 2019).

It is also possible that the results are somewhat limited by the author’s conceptualisation of ‘resilience’ as a positive outcome in the inclusion criteria. During the SLR process, it was noted that some papers measured and conceptualised resilience as a *predictor* (e.g., higher self-esteem) for lower levels of symptoms of anxiety or depression or PTSD, rather than an outcome. However, this was not in line with the research question and therefore were excluded.

Most studies explored general experiences and challenges alongside what promoted resilience for young refugees. In these cases, the relevant sections were extracted to answer the SLR question. In addition, it is worth considering that five of the seven studies included unaccompanied minors in their sample exclusively, which may have had a bearing on the results and in turn the themes produced.

It is also interesting to note that there seemed to be a strong overlap in themes between studies despite participants having spent differing amounts of time in the host country. One might expect that those who arrived in the host country recently might have a different experience of what helps compared with those who have been in the host country for many

years. For some studies, having participants who had been in the host country for various amounts of time may have been appropriate, if specifically incorporated into the research design (e.g., GT methodology), however, this was not always made explicit in papers. For studies that used a methodology that seeks to generate a somewhat homogenous sample, there was not much clarity or rationale for the duration of stay length. For example, Groark et al. (2011) did specify that participants had to have been in the host country for at least six months, but it is less clear what the upper range was for duration of stay for their participants. Similarly, for Thommessen et al.'s (2015) study, they specified that participants had refugee status but little else is known about duration of stay. Some papers did not specify the amount of time spent in the host country at all (Sutton et al., 2006; Bennouna et al., 2019; Spiteri, 2012) which could have added useful insight into the results.

Given the reliance on language in qualitative research and the historic exclusion of those who do not speak English in psychological research (Vara & Patel, 2012), it was encouraging to see most studies drawing on interpreters. The study by Groark et al. (2011) also provided additional information on the types of models of interpreting that were used, which added rigour to their methodology. A particular strength of two of the studies was that interpreters were made available to participants before the stage of interviewing, maximising opportunities for questions to be asked and informed decision making (Bennouna et al., 2019; Thommessen et al., 2015). However, one study did not mention use of interpreters (Ni Raghallaigh, 2011) and one stated that some participants were 'more conversant' in English than others, but interpreters were not used (Spiteri, 2012).

It was also particularly useful that some studies gave detailed descriptions of questions they asked participants or shared their interview schedule / topic guide with the reader. This also

enriched the methodological rigour of these papers. For those studies, it was observed that questions were rarely asked relating to culture or culture-specific coping strategies and support. This is with the exception of Sleijpen et al. (2017) who attended to cultural and contextual influences on dealing with experiences, including what their culture had taught participants and if they noticed differences with the host society. In addition, Sleijpen et al. (2017) also asked participants what the word resilience meant to them, if they knew the word. This seems to be a particular strength of the study in being sensitive in minimising imposing Western terminology or understanding onto participants and exploring their worldviews.

This leads me to wonder whether there were missed opportunities in exploring cultural resources that may have taken the results of studies in a different direction. For example, Bennouna et al. (2019) found that for parents, supporting maintaining their children's connection to their national and ethnic heritage was important. It is possible that the reason this theme was not picked up in other studies is that researchers did not ask about it. However, this may have aligned with some studies' aims, such as Thommessen et al. (2015), who wanted to explore their participants' experiences of the host country and support they received. It is harder to draw conclusions from studies that did not state or describe questions asked, such as the Spiteri (2012) study. Furthermore, the systematic literature search was limited to studies written in the English language, which further impacts what conclusions can be drawn from the themes.

Therefore, this highlights that what we know in the literature about young refugee resilience may be particularly limited to certain contexts and influenced by a Western lens which has informed much of the questions asked in these studies.

The extent to which papers seemed to share their engagement with researcher reflexivity and describe the ethical considerations of the study varied considerably. In all but one paper (Spiteri, 2012), ethical approval was mentioned at the least, but elaboration varied. What was unique about the Thommessen et al. (2015) study was that they described explicitly emphasising to participants that they do not have political power to make hoped for changes they are asking about and emphasised that they are not Swedish nationals, to reduce pressure to express favourable views regarding the host society. Such consideration of power relationships did not feature as much in the other papers.

Two papers elaborated on researcher reflexivity (Groark et al., 2011; Sutton et al., 2006), however in Groark et al. (2011) this was directly linked to how this was managed in relation to impact on the data, whereas in Sutton et al. (2006), this was less explicit. Attending to power and ethical responsibility is pertinent with any participant group and indeed refugee populations, who may have experienced silencing, disempowerment, and oppression (Patel, 2003).

Finally, for the most part, studies did not record that they carried out any member checking, except for Groark et al. (2011) who specified that this took place with one participant. The validity of studies could have increased with this important process of checking results with participants.

## 2.2 Possible implications

Implications from the findings from the SLR suggest that clinicians would be well advised to attend to the different levels of young refugees' social ecology, considering family, school and community support. They suggest that it may be important to equip young refugees with

information about the systems in the UK to support their adjustment. This may facilitate an increased sense of agency and good attainment in education, which studies have found to be important. Another important focus for clinicians may be to facilitate the opportunities for friendships and mentoring relationships to build social support around young refugees.

Further research may help to clarify *how* young refugees would prefer the above ideas to be implemented (Ni Raghallaigh, 2011). Other wider implications may include further investment by the government into schools and systems surrounding young refugees and reducing the duration of uncertainty in the asylum application process.

### 2.3 Rationale for the current study

The SLR process demonstrated how skewed the current literature on young refugees is towards thinking specifically about pathology and reducing symptoms, even when the concept of ‘resilience’ is introduced. Whilst this has its own significant value and place, it gives an incomplete picture on young refugees and misses opportunities to further our understanding about what support they find most meaningful in their lives.

The seven papers that were synthesised showed great overlap in a number of themes; showing how important it is for multiple layers of systems to work together, how facilitation of adjustment and adaptation in various forms was important, how supportive friendships and education made a big impact on young refugees’ lives, and how much of a resource religion can be for them. There is less clarity, however, on how and why these factors promote resilience for young refugees. Less is known about the mechanisms that underlie and link these themes together in a coherent way, to help us understand more about not only what is useful, but why, when, and how. This might give us more direction as to how to incorporate

such interlinking processes into existing and potentially new support systems for young refugees and their families in the UK. Two of the three studies that used GT did not present a model that shows processes (Spiteri, 2012; Ni Raghalleigh, 2011). However, it is worth noting that the GT model referred to in the study by Ni Raghalleigh can be found in an earlier study by Ni Raghalleigh and Gilligan (2010), which fell outside the 10 year review window of the systematic literature review. Sleijpen et al. (2017) presented a model showing resilience strategies employed by young refugees. However, this study was carried out in the Netherlands, which is a different context with a different set of policies applied to young refugees and their families. Particularly during this time of leaving the EU, the UK presents a unique context which has not yet been explored in relation to what processes help and support young refugees to do well and thrive in the UK, according to them.

### 2.3.1 Research question

The research question therefore aimed to understand what has supported young refugees coming to the UK during their journeys from their country of origin, and explore what has continued to support these young refugees, together with what new things they have found to be supportive for their resilience in the UK.

Therefore, the following research question was constructed:

*What processes nurture resilience for young refugees living in the UK?*

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Overview

In this chapter, the chosen methodology and design for the research is discussed, beginning with the rationale for these choices and the researcher's epistemological position. A detailed description of the procedure follows, including participant recruitment, ethical considerations, interview procedure, data collection and data analysis. Finally, the quality appraisal for the research is outlined, together with important considerations regarding researcher reflexivity.

### 3.2 Design

A qualitative design was adopted as it fitted with the exploratory nature of the research question. Qualitative research aims to provide rich, detailed and in-depth descriptions and explanations of phenomena (Sofaer, 1999). It is well suited to exploring areas about which little is known (Stern, 2007), as is the case with this research, and is sensitive to the social context of research (Ritchie et al., 2014).

#### 3.2.1 Epistemological position

The epistemological position adopted was *critical realism* (Bhaskar, 1989). This position prioritises ontology through its assertion that reality (including events, social processes and mechanisms) exists independently of our interpretations and conceptualisations of it (Bhaskar, 1993). However, it also emphasises that all description of such reality, which it argues we should seek to access, is mediated through filters of language, meaning making and social context (Oliver, 2011).

Critical realism in research therefore takes account of broader social and historical contexts that shape how people make meaning of life, whilst retaining the view that one should cautiously and critically investigate reality (Pilgrim & Bentall, 1999). A critical realist position seemed fitting, as it acknowledges the harrowing reality of events that surround forced displacement of refugees, such as war, persecution and violence, as well as hostility, xenophobia and racism, which it assumes researchers and participants can access in part (Levers, 2013), whilst also acknowledging the interactive role participants and researchers play in making sense of these events within a broader socio-political context (Levers, 2013). It therefore places equal emphasis on both meaning-making and the material and societal conditions that facilitated this (Iosifides, 2018), setting it apart from other epistemological positions.

### 3.2.2 Constructivist Grounded Theory

A Constructivist Grounded Theory (GT) method, as developed by Charmaz (2014), was identified as most suited to the epistemological position and the research question.

GT, initially developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), moves towards generating a “unified theoretical explanation” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 107) for processes, grounded in data. It aims to generate “a general explanation (a theory) of processes, actions or interactions shaped by the views of a large number of participants” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p173). This aligned with the researcher’s aim to understand how processes interact to nurture resilience for young refugees living in the UK.

Constructivist GT contrasts with earlier versions (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which fit with a positivist tradition (Charmaz, 2014), and thus view data to represent objective facts about a knowable world, with the researcher's task being to 'discover' theory from existing data (Charmaz, 2006).

Constructivist GT attends to 'how' and 'why' participants construct meanings and actions, by contextually situating analysis in time, place, culture and situation (Charmaz, 2006).

Constructivist GT was selected as it analyses accounts for both structural aspects of participants' lives as well as meaning-making. It was felt that understanding how, why, and in what contexts would be most useful clinically and for developing relevant services and policies.

Some potential challenges of GT include the laborious process of coding, which risks novice researchers losing sight of the task (Hussein et al., 2014). It was therefore important to involve supervisors throughout the process to monitor and circumvent this. Another potential pitfall is the risk that researchers may not employ enough reflexivity, subsequently not prioritising participants' meaning-making, but their own (Moghaddam, 2006). This is addressed in section 3.3.9.

### 3.2.3 Consideration of alternative methods

The following methods were also considered during the design of this research:

**Table 8:** *Consideration of alternative methods*

<b>Method</b>	<b>Considerations and reasons for excluding</b>
<i>Participatory Action Research (PAR)</i>	PAR focuses on the inclusion of participants in research as subjects as well as research collaborators (Halilovich, 2013). It also focuses on the empowerment of participants through the process of research, and the outcomes through examining political structures that disempower marginalised, deprived and oppressed people to find ways in which such structures can be changed (Halilovich, 2013). This method therefore lends itself well to the research question and aligned with the values of the researcher. However, unfortunately, the approach is known to also be highly resource and labour intensive (Temple et al., 2004) meaning that time and funding required to do the research justice was beyond the time-constraints of a doctoral thesis, in this instance.
<i>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)</i>	IPA is committed to examining the ways in which people make sense of their life experiences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). It is used to investigate and interpret in detail the ‘lived experiences’ of people who have experienced a common phenomenon (Alase, 2017). This method would have allowed deep exploration of lived experiences of young refugees in relation to resilience, to get an ‘insider’s perspective’, but would not have allowed for an understanding of how processes interact together for a diverse sample of young refugees.

<p><i>Narrative Analysis</i> (NA)</p>	<p>NA focuses on how individuals' stories are presented based on narratives available and views self-narration as both constructions and claims of identity (Linde, 1993). This could have been an insightful method to employ, given the different narratives young refugees have available to them, from different contexts that they have experienced.</p> <p>However, NA is concerned with the way people construct self-accounts (Burck, 2005), whereas the researcher aimed to draw on a range of participant experiences to notice commonalities between them to start developing theory. In addition, the focus on language might have been more challenging when participants use their second language, or when an interpreter is involved.</p>
<p><i>Discourse Analysis</i> (DA)</p>	<p>DA is concerned with the way in which texts have been constructed in relation to their social and historical 'situatedness' (Cheek, 2004). Texts are viewed as both constructed by and constructing understandings of reality (Cheek, 2004). Although this approach attends to social processes, this is in relation to language use. The researcher was less focused on the way language was being used by participants and more in the interaction of processes constructed.</p>
<p><i>Thematic Analysis</i> (TA)</p>	<p>TA, developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), takes an exploratory approach towards experiences, perceptions and influencing factors to identify meaningful patterns in the data (Braun, Clarke, &amp; Terry, 2015). However, for this research, capturing underlying themes in the data risked missing nuances of social processes of interest in the research question, and not accounting for social and political contexts (Alase, 2017).</p>

### 3.2.4 The use of semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were deemed most appropriate and well-suited to a GT method as they allow for the flexibility of pursuing ideas immediately in interviews and allowing the interviewer to test concepts and categories constructed from prior interviews (Charmaz, 2014). The interview schedule is discussed in section 3.3.3.

## 3.3 Procedure

### 3.3.1 Participant Recruitment and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic context

The researcher planned to approach local interested third sector organisations that specialise in supporting refugees. The hope was that organisations would share the research information with the researcher's contact details. The researcher was willing to volunteer her time as a way of offering something back to an organisation, if they wished.

This initial phase of recruitment coincided with the first UK lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented various challenges. Some organisations that were contacted had to halt operations and close whilst others were busy navigating shifting services online and prioritising supporting resulting crises whilst facing staff sickness and stress. This meant that supporting this research was simply not an option for many organisations or understandably less of a priority than other demands. It also meant that many organisations were not looking to recruit volunteers during this time.

In addition, recruitment coincided with other events requiring urgent responses and action from organisations, such as the tragic deaths of migrants who had attempted to cross the

English Channel (Grierson & Willsher, 2020), and subsequent political decisions and actions (PA Media, 2020).

Other non-pandemic related obstacles also affected the recruitment process. These are further reflected on in the research journal (See Appendix B). These included organisations' perceptions of the acceptability of the research to young refugees and subsequent decisions made.

### 3.3.2 Consultation

It was important to the researcher to involve young refugees in shaping the research, within the scope of the methodology. Initially, this was advertised as an alternative way of partaking; through giving feedback on the interview schedule. However, despite best efforts to recruit, no young people opted for this role. There could have been various reasons for this. It is possible that this role was not emphasised by organisations. Perhaps not enough information was provided on what it entailed, and why it would appeal. It is also possible that difficulty recruiting for this was reflective of wider challenges of recruitment generally, as discussed in the previous section.

After discussing these challenges with the supervisory team, alternative ways to invite input were considered. In the absence of consultation with young refugees, it was agreed that it would be valuable to have the input of professionals who work closely with young refugees. A Senior Case Worker working in an organisation that specialises in supporting refugees agreed to give their feedback on the draft interview schedule. They gave invaluable insights, which helped to adapt the researcher's approach in asking the questions. For example, they pointed out that the use of comparison questions such as 'what improved the situation?' could

be difficult for those who have experienced prolonged periods of crisis, or who might struggle to remember better times. This was a sad and eye-opening reminder which helped increase the researcher's sensitivity when asking questions; adapting wording to accommodate for the possibility of not remembering nor experiencing better times, and asking about small changes such as 'a little bit better' so as to not minimise the hardship.

In addition, interviewees were invited to give their input on the models being constructed at the analysis stage.

### 3.3.3 Interview schedule

The interview schedule was initially constructed through discussion with the supervisory team and by drawing on relevant research literature. Questions were kept flexible and open to explore processes related to 'resilience' in its broadest definition. In line with Ungar (2012)'s perspective on resilience, the interview schedule included questions about contexts, actions and people that individuals experienced as helpful during difficult times. The wording of the introduction was adapted from Scott (2018).

In line with the Constructivist GT approach (Charmaz, 2014), the interview schedule was adapted as concepts and categories evolved over the process of interviewing. This was to 'test out' concepts and categories from the first set of interviews and further explore gaps, processes and questions that arose.

### 3.3.4 Ethics

Mackenzie, Dowell and Pittaway (2007) discuss the need to go beyond traditional ethics frameworks to fully consider complexities involved in research with refugees and highlight the need to consider autonomy as relational.

Halilovich (2013) argues that researching communities who have experienced forced displacement should be a moral justification for researchers to take a proactive role in speaking alongside rather than on behalf of those they research, whilst not compromising scientific rigour, which is also an ethical responsibility. Therefore, ethical considerations in relation to power, cultural sensitivity and language were pertinent (Halilovich, 2013). These are outlined in the following sections.

#### 3.3.4.1 Ethical Approvals

Ethical approval was sought from and granted by the University of Hertfordshire Health and Human Sciences Ethics Committee with Delegated Authority (see Appendix C). A request was made to extend the validity of approval and this was granted (Appendix D).

Organisations approached were also asked about their own protocols to follow. Two community organisations which the researcher had approached requested letters of endorsement from the Principal Supervisor of this research. From organisations from which participants were recruited, the research was taken for discussion in team and management meetings before being approved. One organisation also sought feedback from a member of the management team who has extensive experience of research and could also offer a valuable perspective, being of Syrian background.

#### *3.3.4.2 Informed consent*

Initially, organisations were asked to share the research poster, which stated the researcher's details (Appendix E) whom could then provide the information sheet (Appendix F), which was adapted from Scott (2018), and consent form (Appendix G). However, some organisations suggested that some young people may not have the confidence to initiate contact with a stranger, and that it would be preferable if the organisation facilitated approaching young people about the research and sharing contact details with the researcher if interest was expressed and consent given for this. It was important that young refugees did not feel under pressure to take part, particularly with the power dynamic inherent in being asked by the same organisation involved in offering support presently. To minimise the impact of this, it was agreed that organisations would stress that this research is completely independent to them, and would in no way impact the support they receive, whatever they decide.

If participants required a translated version of the information, this was provided in the preferred language (Appendix H).

To avoid placing burdens on participants, if they did not have access to a printer to physically sign and return the consent forms due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, verbal consent was accepted. For participants aged 14 and 15, consent was sought from a parent/guardian and the young person, according to the NHS Health Research Authority (2018) guidance on research involving children in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

At the start of the interview, the researcher went through the consent form with participants to check agreement with each point, and provided an opportunity for questions to be asked.

Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw, and were asked if they were willing to be contacted again to give their feedback on the developing findings, to which they all agreed.

#### *3.3.4.3 Confidentiality*

Terms of confidentiality were outlined in the participant information sheet and reiterated at the start of interviews. Recordings and transcriptions were stored securely on a 128-bit encrypted USB, which only the researcher could access. Transcriptions were anonymised and identifiable information was removed before sharing with the supervisory team for analysis. The interpreter involved signed a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix I). Upon completion of the research project, audio recordings will be deleted.

#### *3.3.4.4 Participant wellbeing*

The researcher was intentional in focusing the interview schedule on what helped participants during difficult times, rather than asking about difficulties and hardships experienced. Discussions were had with the supervisory team, where it was suggested that some participants might wish to speak of their experiences of hardships in detail, linked with what they found helpful, whilst others may not. It was therefore agreed that a sensitive way to accommodate for both preferences would be to phrase the question as optional for participants; an invitation which they could refuse, and which was followed up with a reminder to only share whatever feels ok to share now. One must acknowledge significant issues of power inherent in the interviewer-interviewee relationship generally and in this particular context (this will be explored further in section 3.3.4.6). However, it was hoped that wording the question to make it explicitly optional in this way helped reduce pressure, and allowed participants to opt out if they preferred. In addition, participants were reminded

during the interview that they did not have to answer and could pause or stop at any point. At the end of the interview, a debrief sheet was provided (Appendix J) with information on support, should they wish to access it.

#### *3.3.4.5 Remuneration*

A £10 Amazon voucher purchased using the research budget was presented to participants via email following interviews. This was to thank participants for their valuable contribution, reimburse them for their time and participation and it was hoped to be a way to reduce the power imbalance through the principle of ‘reciprocity’ (Lokot, 2019). Participants were made aware of this from the participant information sheet and when the researcher was setting up the interviews. Organisations were consulted on the value of the voucher, to offer their views on what would be perceived as a reasonable amount that is neither likely to cause offense nor become a coercive factor for participation. One participant insisted on not accepting a voucher, as he stressed that he chose to take part to help, not wishing to receive anything in return.

#### *3.3.4.6 Considerations regarding power*

The researcher believes in the importance of challenging dominant narratives of vulnerability often associated with refugees (Halilovich, 2013). However, it was also important to consider the impact of structural inequalities and restrictions on power relations in the research context. Participants may have had their lives and freedoms threatened, and were potentially navigating well-founded fears, stigma, cultural and language barriers (Halilovich, 2013). In contrast, the researcher was introduced to participants through their institutional and academic affiliations, social position, freedom of movement and professional networks (Halilovich, 2013). The researcher was mindful of the importance of empowering rather than further disempowering participants during the process. Prioritising developing a trusting and

mutually respectful relationship in the interview was central to this (Halilovich, 2013). One way the researcher addressed this was to ensure they were as transparent as possible with participants from the start, clarifying their role and background and emphasising the independence from home office procedures.

Another way this was considered was by having informal conversation and ice-breaker questions before starting the interview. The researcher purposefully used their imperfect Arabic with Arabic-speaking participants at the start of the interview, as a way of reversing the power imbalance of using the English language, as most participants were not fully fluent in English at the time of the interview. Another way was to ensure to ask open questions, which allowed participants to express views more freely rather than purposive questions which privilege the researcher's assumptions (Lokot, 2019).

#### *3.3.4.7 Working with interpreters*

Research in the field of Psychology has traditionally excluded those who do not speak English, and has not addressed issues that arise in conducting research with those whose first language is not English (Vara & Patel, 2012). It was therefore an active decision to include those who do not speak English in this research.

Given that having the opportunity to speak is both a privilege and type of political power, the researcher was conscious of not mirroring and replicating experiences of being silenced, disempowered and oppressed by people with more privilege in the process of interpretation (Patel, 2003). The researcher was aware that interpretation requires a process of filtering through the medium of the interpreter, whom interprets based on their own ideas and value judgements, consciously or subconsciously (Haenel, 1997).

An interpreter was involved in six interviews with participants who opted to do the interview in Arabic. They were recommended by an organisation from which some participants were recruited. It was ensured that the interpreter was both appropriately qualified and experienced (Tribe & Tunariu, 2009).

Guidelines by the BPS (2017) for psychologists working with interpreters were followed. For example, the interpreter's specific dialect was considered, to check for compatibility and the interpreter's country of origin was considered, to account for social and political factors that could influence the interpreting process.

The interpreter was regarded an active agent, rather than an "invisible interpreter" (Swartz, 1998 as cited in Vara & Patel, 2012). They were contacted prior to interviewing and were sent the interview schedule in advance to allow them to prepare. Time was spent with the interpreter after the interviews to reflect on culturally relevant factors they noticed and to provide a space to debrief, particularly if there were shared histories or experiences mentioned in the interviews (BPS, 2017).

In line with the epistemological stance, the model of interpretation agreed was the 'cultural broker/bicultural worker' (Tribe & Morrissey, 2004). This allowed for the interpreter to stay as close as possible to the language of the participant but also allowed for relevant cultural and contextual variables to be included. In interviews with Arabic-speaking participants, the researcher was also able to compare the Arabic with the English interpretation, as additional validation.

### 3.3.5 Data collection

#### 3.3.5.1 Participant inclusion and exclusion criteria

The participant inclusion criteria were those who self-define as refugees, and who self-define their age to be between 14 and 24. Initially, the age range was between 14 and 21 years, but this was widened to 24 to increase likelihood of recruitment during the challenges described in section 3.3.1.

As the research was focused on the context of the decision for the UK to leave the EU, prospective participants needed to have arrived to the UK following the referendum date in 2016 (UK Government, 2016) and January 2020, which was 6 months prior to the planned start for interviewing.

Participants from any country of origin could take part, and both English and non-English speaking participants could be included.

#### 3.3.5.2 Participant demographics

**Table 9:** Participant demographic information

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Country of Origin	Year of arrival in UK	Interpreter involvement?	Education	Faith
Rami	21	Male	Syria	2016	No	University	Islam
Dima	15	Female	Syria	2017	No	School	Islam
Hossam	16	Male	Syria	2017	No	School	Islam
Nour	22	Female	Syria	2017	No	University	Islam
Tareq	18	Male	Syria	2017	No	College	Islam
Hanan	19	Female	Syria	2016	No	University	Islam
Karam	15	Male	Iraq	2018	Yes	School	Christianity
Hala	14	Female	Syria	2018	Yes	School	Islam
Fadi	17	Male	Iraq	2018	Yes	School	Christianity

Anas	22	Male	Syria	2020	Yes	College	Islam
Rita	24	Female	Iraq	2017	No	University graduate	Christianity
Cordelia	17	Female	Iraq	2017	No	School	Christianity

All participants had been through at least one other host country before the UK. All of the host countries were in the MENA geographical region (*MENA Region Countries List 2020 Update* | *IstiZada*, n.d.).

### 3.3.6 Sampling strategy

In the initial stages of interviewing, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who met the inclusion criteria. Once tentative codes were constructed after the first few interviews, theoretical sampling was undertaken; a process of collecting more data to further explore concepts developing from prior analysis (Charmaz, 2014). The aim of this was to refine categories, explore their boundaries and identify relationships between them (Charmaz, 2014). Memo-ing allowed the researcher to follow up on leads identified and questions that arose during the analysis of the first few interviews (Butler, Copnell, & Hall, 2018). This led to the addition of more questions, for example, the researcher noticed that participants spoke of hope, but wanted to explore ‘what enabled you to have hope in the first place?’.

Theoretical sampling allowed the researcher to ‘test out’ developing concepts and categories through seeking specific participant characteristics. This included faith, country of origin and alternative recruitment routes than third sector organisations.

Theoretical sampling usually stops when data saturation is reached. However, in Constructivist GT, this is conceptualised as the point at which no new properties of categories are collected when data is added and categories are considered robust enough to encompass

variations in the study (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher interviewed twelve participants in total.

### 3.3.7 Interview procedure and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

A suitable day and time for interviews were arranged with participants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher and participants were restricted to options of using a virtual platform or telephone for interviews. The platform 'Zoom' was selected for its user-friendly functions and widespread popularity. This allowed the researcher to recruit participants from a wider geographical range.

At the start of the interview, agreements were made between researcher, interpreter and participant on how to navigate interpreting and time was taken to establish rapport, explain the process and check consent. The interview schedule (Appendix K) was used as a guide; particular attention paid to participants' language within the context described allowed the researcher to bridge what participants were saying with the research question (Charmaz, 2014). Follow-up questions and prompts invited further elaboration and exploration of meanings. Interviews lasted between 40 and 120 minutes.

### 3.3.8 Data analysis

#### 3.3.8.1 *Memo writing*

Data analysis began immediately after the first interview through memo-writing, to record initial thoughts, feelings and reflections. Memo-writing has been described as the mortar, if data are building blocks of a developing theory (Stern, 2007). They are storehouses of ideas generated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) that when documented, leave a historic audit trail of the thought process behind the analysis (Birks & Mills, 2015). Through memo-writing, the

researcher began to identify relationships between ideas from interviews and then between codes, focused codes and categories. This allowed the researcher to capture reflections and ideas throughout the analysis journey, increase their sensitivity to the data and develop their analysis accordingly. Memos and reflections were recorded in the researcher's reflective journal for the research. An example of memo-ing can be seen in Appendix L.

#### *3.3.8.2 Transcription*

Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, who attended to apparent non-verbal cues, such as pauses, laughter or particular topics that elicited an emotive response. The data was inputted into NVivo 12 Software, to assist organisation and management of the data.

#### *3.3.8.3 Initial coding*

The first five interviews were analysed using line by line coding, the first step in GT analysis (Birks & Mills, 2015). This involved going through each line of data and coding the social and psychological processes and actions that answered the research question (Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019). The researcher aimed to remain descriptive and close to the data, to ensure they were remaining open to all theoretical directions (Charmaz, 2006). Line by line coding is a highly useful tool for seeing and analysing events and implicit patterns that may have otherwise been missed (Charmaz, 2014). In this way it sparked new ideas and directions to pursue. At this stage, short excerpts of the anonymised data were also independently coded by peers in a GT workshop to quality-check the codes.

#### *3.3.8.4 Focused coding*

This next stage involved identifying the codes that appeared more frequently or had more significance in comparison to other codes (Charmaz, 2014). Through memo writing, the

researcher had some ideas on which codes appeared to recur, which aided the process. All initial codes from the five interviews were exported into a Microsoft Word document, and were subsequently grouped into focused codes. A large extract of focused codes were reviewed by the principal supervisor to check for quality and coherence. These focused codes were used to analyse the subsequent interviews.

#### *3.3.8.5 Developing categories and subcategories*

To raise focused codes into conceptual categories, diagramming was employed to help construct a visual representation of categories (Charmaz, 2014). This involved drawing as well as cutting out codes and physically moving them around different groupings. Examples of diagramming can be seen in Appendix M.

#### *3.3.8.6 Theoretical coding*

Theoretical coding then took place, a stage which involved analysing the relationships between constructed categories, integrating them together into a theory that helped tell a coherent analytic story (Rapley, 2014). The researcher used diagramming to draw out conceptual maps which helped her to see directions and connections between categories and consider them in relation to time and space. This was an iterative process that involved revisiting data, constantly making comparisons between categories and codes, leading to rewording categories to better fit the data (Stevens et al., 2015). This led to a tentative GT model, which was reviewed during member-checking with seven participants. Their feedback allowed the grounded theory model to evolve further, increasing its credibility. An analysis audit trail can be found in Appendix N.

### 3.3.9 Quality assurance

Reflexivity in research has been described as the ‘thoughtful self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched’ (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p. ix). Within the selected epistemological approach, this extended to examining rather than erasing how the researcher’s privileges, values and preconceptions may shape the research (Charmaz, 2014) and attending to wider structural power imbalances and social contexts within which meanings were being negotiated (Finlay & Gough, 2003).

The researcher endeavoured to infuse reflexivity into all stages of this research process. Preconceptions only come into awareness when taken-for-granted assumptions are challenged (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, this included keeping an ongoing journal alongside memo-writing in which the researcher explored their relationship to the process, engaging in reflexivity exercises, including reflecting on social discourses, and the researcher’s values, assumptions and identities in relation to the research and participants. In addition, regular bracketing interviews took place with a peer and each stage of analysis was reviewed by the supervisory team.

### 3.3.10 Methodological rigour

To assess the quality of this research, the eight “Big Tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research were used (Tracy, 2010). This outlines eight markers of high quality qualitative methodological research, each of which was applied to assess this research (section 5.5). This framework was also applied to the SLR findings to assess the quality of the research.

## Chapter 4 Results

In this chapter, an overview of the co-constructed GT model is presented. Each category and sub-category is then elaborated on in turn, supported by participant quotes, to help the reader to follow the model presented.

### 4.1 Overview

This model has been developed from data co-constructed from the twelve interviews and additional seven member-checking meetings with participants, together with the author's own meaning-making combined with discussions with the supervisory team throughout.

The resulting model presents a theory from a constructivist GT underpinning. The theory offers an understanding of resilience processes for young refugees, their relationships, how processes come together and why. However, such theorising is situated in the context of its construction; it is the researcher's interpretation of participants' meanings and actions, and the researcher's meaning-making of the structures and processes that participants are embedded within at this time (Charmaz, 2014).

Thirteen categories were co-constructed. They are outlined in Table 10 with their subcategories and the GT model is presented in Figure 5 showing the relationships between the categories.

The included quotes were selected as the most illustrative, though they reflect a somewhat imbalanced representation of the twelve participants interviewed. This is because earlier interviews naturally tended to result in richer quotes, whereas later interviews were more focused on 'testing' the GT model, to see how it resonated with participants.

**Table 10:** *Categories and subcategories of grounded theory model*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>
<b>1 Seeking out rest and relief to go on</b>	1A Taking shelter in hope
	1B Protecting fun
	1C Drawing meaning and comfort from religion
	1D Leaning on community like family
<b>2 Family togetherness sustaining</b>	
<b>3 Comparing difficult experiences</b>	
<b>4 Seeing the world anew</b>	4A Relating differently to adversity and challenge
	4B '[Taking] with us the important things for our lives'
<b>5 Being seen</b>	5A Having strengths and needs recognised
	5B Being proactively offered support
<b>6 Being protected from racism and bullying</b>	
<b>7 Being connected to people with shared backgrounds</b>	
<b>8 Making new connections</b>	
<b>9 Improving English language</b>	
<b>10 Being shown ways of living in UK</b>	
<b>11 Developing adaptability</b>	11A Gaining independence skills
	11B Learning to ask for help
<b>12 Giving and giving back</b>	
<b>13 Recognising a promising future</b>	

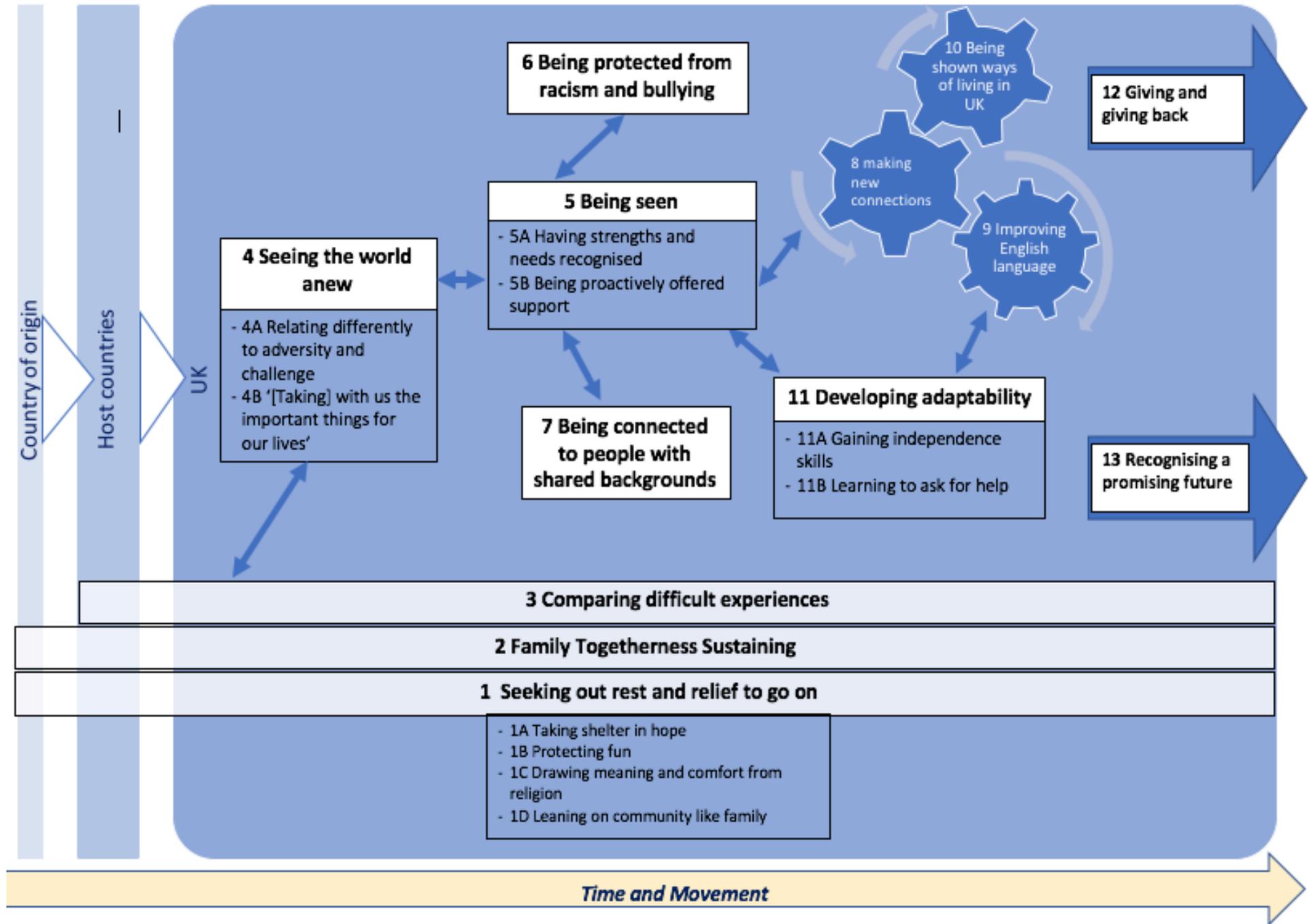


Figure 4: Grounded Theory Model

## 4.2 Category 1: Seeking out rest and relief to go on

In the context of unrelenting pressures and challenges in their countries of origin, participants indicated ways that they drew on rest and relief to keep going. There was consensus during member-checking that these were not only crucial sources of support in their country of origin, but also throughout their journey through other host countries and the UK.

Participants seemed to seek out rest and relief in various forms, therefore, these were co-constructed as four subcategories;

### 4.2.1 Subcategory 1A: Taking shelter in hope

Some participants spoke of engaging with the concept of hoping or dreaming as necessary and protective from current pain for them and their families. Hoping or dreaming allowed thinking about a different future, when they have a better life and can look back on these times. As one participant put it, "...since being in Syria more or less everyone had a dream of like being somewhere with a better life and everything" (Rami, age 21). This seemed to help them both persevere through the current reality and move forward towards this hope:

...at any point wherever you are...there was this like light at the end of the tunnel. No matter how tiny and small it was, there was like a light at the end of the tunnel. It was as if we knew there was a change coming, we just didn't know what it was and we didn't know when it was coming...And yeah that kind of made us look forward – it was as if...all the difficulties everyone was facing, seemed or like felt temporary? (Rami, age 21)

...we just tried to...always think that one day will come when we'll have, like a better life than this. We always just waiting for that day. (Hossam, age 16)

Nour's family's hope of returning to Syria seemed to protect them from the pain of separation;

It was helpful at the beginning, because you had that hope...when you move to another country, and you leave the closest people to you... and you know that you won't come back to that space, you won't see that person in your life ever, that's gonna make...an injury in your heart. You're gonna feel that your heart is broken every time because there's someone that you really love, ... and having that hope that you're gonna come back one day, kept us, you know, kept us stronger, kept us staying strong. (Nour, age 22)

Such hope therefore seemed to provide strength, perseverance and a buffer from pain from the beginning of the journey and throughout for young refugees and their families.

#### 4.2.2 Subcategory 1B: Protecting fun

Other participants spoke about the importance of having a break or distraction from hardship through having fun. This seemed to allow them to forget about problems for a while:

...going out of this lonely or sad zone that I used to always stay in ...when I go out with my friends I probably just forget this for now. You know, just be happy for the time I'm with them. (Hossam, age 16)

Rami spoke about the necessity of separating out areas of his life to manage. He spoke about how friendships allowed for light-heartedness when life was stressful:

... I don't bring up my personal issues or personal circumstances from home to friends. I don't take them out of my own home...It's just like jokes and laughs and all fun there. (Rami, age 21)

Another participant described how this was actively encouraged by adults in the family during difficulty. Karam (age 15) shared "...the adults advised us to forget everything, live your life, play, don't worry about any of this."

Protecting fun therefore seemed to be a way that participants retained some normality in their lives, and found relief in spaces free from hardship.

#### 4.2.3 Subcategory 1C: Drawing meaning and comfort from religion

Initially, five of twelve participants emphasised the role of drawing support from religion. During member checking, all participants agreed that this played a crucial role for them or their families from the beginning until now.

For some participants, religion provided meaning for the adversity:

...we see struggles as a way of God like examining us and seeing how much we can handle.

(Hanan, age 19)

In turn, this led to a sense of hope for some that they will be rewarded afterwards, or that they can overcome obstacles, which provided motivation to keep going:

...we always...whatever you go through God is always with you and He's gonna reward you for the things you're going through.... Like if you're going through bad things, just remember that God's gonna give you lots of good things in the future so just keep going, don't lose hope. Because there's something good that's gonna happen to you. Allah – God, He prepared it for you. Just waiting for you, to you know, go on and pass these things to get and reach the things that is waiting for you. What's meant to be for you. (Nour, age 22)

...in Quran it says like that God would never give someone too many like issues or big problems that he cannot handle so basically whatever happens, whatever bad things happened to me, I know and I believe that I can do it just because God believes in me. (Hanan, age 19)

One participant described a family ritual they engaged in daily, which helped them to keep going:

We have like that thing of everyday we have to talk everything and say like ‘tomorrow’s gonna be better’ ... ‘We’re gonna pray together, we’re gonna wake up for our fajr and pray together and dua to Alah tomorrow’s gonna be better not same as today.’ Like, everyday say that.... (Dima, age 15)

Another participant spoke about God as her only source of stability and comfort, during the upheaval of her family and arriving somewhere new:

...we left everything behind. There’s nothing with you, so it’s just your faith and only God who can help me...God filled the gap. He’s with me and He knows what’s going on. (Rita, age 24)

Therefore, drawing on religion played manifold roles for participants. It seemed to act as an anchor to participants and their families facing uncertain and difficult situations; providing steadiness, meaning, comfort, hope and reward, and giving them motivation to keep going.

#### 4.2.4 Subcategory 1D: Leaning on community like family

Many participants spoke about depending on people around them for help and support.

During member-checking, many stressed that these people were sometimes not family, but *felt like* family:

... back home I feel like if you did need help, you’d kind of get the help that you need immediately there’s like your family around, there’s like people that you know and are like family in the community there. (Rami, age 21)

One participant reflected on this as a substitute of formal support services, and how important it was to have access to this:

...the support that you have from the close people, is the best thing to, to have. Because, at that time in Syria we didn't have any services that you can call and supports you mentally or physically or emotionally or even financially, we didn't have anything of that at all. So the only source that I had was my cousins, my siblings, my friends, that was the only way to, keep me, you know, hope! (Nour, age 22)

Rami also spoke about how support offered by community in the country of origin was often 'indirect'; not necessarily talking about emotions, which can be difficult, but their communal sharing in life together was felt to be important and supportive:

Sense of community is one thing. Like back home everyone knows each other for example. If someone needs help...they'd get the help that they need from the people in their community. If someone's got a wedding literally the whole village, the whole town would be there... (Rami, age 21)

Rest and relief through hope, religion, fun or community therefore seemed necessary for participants to draw on to go on during times of stress and adversity. These were often drawn on collectively, as a family or community.

#### 4.3 Category 2: Family togetherness sustaining

Most participants spoke about their family's togetherness being pivotal for them. At a time of being uprooted and afterwards, families' togetherness provided a sense of stability and participants looked to them to fulfil their needs. Participants spoke of the importance of the reassurance of their family's safety in alleviating fears. Fadi was asked what kept him going when leaving his country of origin:

I believe being all together safe and sound, knowing that that area has gone but me and my family are all ok, made me not very scared. (Fadi, age 17)

Similarly, this was echoed by Hossam:

When we came out of Syria it was war. And just seeing how my family, my uncles, my dad and my mum they were all like you know **good**. Like, none of them dead, none of them hurt ...that was like...the bright side of it. (Hossam, age 16)

One participant described how her family became everything to her; all she had and all she needed:

...Because I was with my mum, dad and brothers. And my mum and my grandad was with me so, I did not need anything else...because there's nothing else could help me same as that. Cos I did not have anything else other than my family. It was all my family (Dima, age 15)

Some participants spoke about how important it was to be with family who lived in the UK:

...the best support that you can have...people you already know.'... Because the support that we had from my uncle, there's no words can describe that. (Nour, age 22)

Therefore, this subcategory speaks to the many ways that families' togetherness remained important at each part of the journey for participants and became a key source of support.

#### 4.4 Category 3: Comparing difficult experiences

Throughout the interviews, participants made many comparisons of their experiences of living in different countries. They recalled previous hardships as a reference point to compare with. Comparisons in relation to systems, such as education, were often made between other host countries and the UK:

We came and everything was becoming better, we went to school... we was thinking that the school in [host country] was the best, and if you compare now between the school in [host country] and [school name], it don't even like, you can't see it! How bottom it is, you can't see it! (Dima, age 15)

The same participant spoke about how making comparisons of the place and how she was treated there motivated her to work hard:

I always compare between here and [host country] to see like how well and how good the place I am in...this place is a very good place, so I stay like working hard. Because when I was in [host country] I was like 'this place is not a good place for me'. So I stopped working hard at school. (Dima, age 15)

Comparisons also took place between participants' experiences and experiences of other young refugees, which seemed to lead to a bigger appreciation of support, such as from school:

My friends on the other hand...the only reason I learnt more than them...get better grades than them...is because their school didn't help them. (Hossam, age 16)

Comparisons were also occasionally made about things that participants missed, such as celebrating religious and family occasions around family and friends. However, it seems that the role of constant comparison-making perhaps facilitated a sense of relief or a cherishing of their lives now, which links onto the next category.

#### 4.5 Category 4: Seeing the world anew

Participants spoke about how their experiences shaped the ways they view and approach life and challenges in the UK. Their sense of what and who is important seemed to shift or

reshuffle as a result. Participants described how their experiences meant “suddenly having to grow up” (Rita, age 24), how this was “eye opening” (Rami, age 21), “changes your whole personality” (Nour, age 22) and how some feel they are “not the person I was” (Rita, age 24). Some of these particular approaches to life and relationships have been co-constructed in the following subcategories.

#### 4.5.1 Subcategory 4A: Relating differently to adversity and challenge

Following on from Category 3, participants also made comparisons between the kinds of environments and stresses faced in each country, allowing them to place some of those stresses in perspective.

When asked about challenges in the UK, Hanan stated: “...it’s not as big as problems we had in [host country] basically”... (Hanan, age 19). Rami compared worries he experienced in a host country with the UK: “which place...[is] gonna be your last place, or which day you’re gonna live... if that’s gonna be your last days” This seemed to improve his relationship to stress and worries in the UK:

...nowadays, it’s much better because...there’s less things to be stressed about. Even though like there is a lot of things at the end of the day...that could stress you out, but like none of them is as serious as like any of the things that we, people used to be stressed about back in Syria or back in [host country]. (Rami, age 21)

At the same time, Rami also explained how his lived experiences expanded his knowledge and awareness of risk, giving him an ability to notice and respond to it:

...the knowledge that some people are capable of doing xyz whereas, the knowledge meaning the fact that you’ve experienced a human being doing xyz whereas someone else just

kind of sees it on the TV or in a film...Whereas you have seen it yourself so you know it, and you know another human is capable of doing something like that whether it's in Syria, in [host country], or in the UK...Whereas I feel like a lot of people here at Uni are a bit naïve if I may say, in the way they look at things...they just kind of think they're invincible and they're just like safe and er, that they're untouchable... (Rami, age 21)

Such exposure to adversity seemed to lead to certain ways of responding. Dima spoke about relating to difficulty in life as necessary and unavoidable. In the following extract she refers to significant challenges her family faced in a host country before coming to the UK. It seems that looking back on her experiences led her to feeling more capable of facing challenges now:

...the things that I came with, it helped me. It was a step in my life, I had to do it, I have to feel that I did that thing. I don't think it's like 'oh I wish I did not go in that place. But if I did not come to that place, I would never have come to here. It's a road, and you have to go through all the road to get where you want. You can't just skip places you don't want from your life and say 'oh no I'm not gonna go to that I'm just gonna jump', you can't jump. You're gonna fail if you jump. You have to walk slowly so you get everything you want.  
(Dima, age 15)

Hanan echoed a similar reflection process of looking back and recognising the extent of what she and her family went through. She reflected in the interview about how life is meant to be:

...life is a bit...of a nightmare sometimes...like it's hard. It's meant to be hard, isn't it?... there's always something you're looking for that makes you move on or makes you carry on living... (Hanan, age 19)

She later added:

... you know when you have a really bad memory where you question... 'was that a nightmare or was it real life? Did I actually live through that? Well - we made it through.

(Hanan, age 19)

Tareq relayed a similar idea when asked what he has learned about how to deal with problems:

...in my country it's show it to me already because I have been staying in the middle of the worst... so it shows me a lot. I got to understand like about seeing it as...how we can be strong if you lose someone from your family. (Tareq, age 18)

Such expectations of life together with recognition of one's ability to make it through may have informed participants' approaches to challenges.

Other participants seemed to respond by drawing on past experiences of starting a new life somewhere, in extremely challenging times, as encouragement that they can do this again.

Nour spoke about this in the context of encouraging her siblings, at a time that they were struggling with friendships and language and wanted to go back to a different host country:

...I was trying to be strong just because of my siblings, I wanted to show them that we can do that. And it's only the beginning, and it's ok to start from the bottom, and we've been through that. We went to [host country], we started from the bottom as well. We were not, you know, we were not good at the beginning but that's just the beginning. (Nour, age 22)

Participants seemed to express an attitude of being more at ease with what they face. Rather than fret over needing things to go a certain way, participants perhaps adopted a flexibility that allowed them to not hold matters too tightly. This was expressed by Rami, in thinking about imagining what could improve his life now:

...I'm trying to think because, I can't think of alternatives. A lot of times I'm just like yeah this is the way that things are, just roll with it... (Rami, age 21)

A similar sentiment was expressed by Tareq, regarding making friends:

I'm trying to make friends from the college but if I did, I did, if I didn't, didn't." (Tareq, age 18)

Hanan also alluded to this notion of taking what comes, when asked about what helped her and her family cope with challenges in one of the host countries:

... We just tried to like, live and just be like, 'tomorrow is a better day maybe, maybe not', you know? (Hanan, age 19)

Rita shared that someone asked her about the hardest thing she experienced. Her response was "the hardest thing? It is yet to come, I don't know" then spoke of accepting God's will and taking comfort in this. Such awareness of life's potential adversities coupled with an openness or acceptance to it showed how some participants' exposure to hardship impacted their view of life and their approach to it, in a way one might expect from someone more advanced in age, who has lived through much adversity.

Such awareness through exposure to adversity seemed to spur participants onto taking hold of opportunities presented in their new country, despite uncertainty or discomfort:

...if I wanna do something, I do it – I don't like get nervous or scared I just do it cos whatever happened...what's the worst that's gonna happen? I just do it. (Hossam, age 16)

The idea of ‘what’s the worst that could happen?’ was one that all participants deeply resonated with during member-checking. Holding this stance meant that some participants took certain risks in social situations:

...in my English class if she say a word I don’t know it or she write it and I don’t know how to spell, I straight away put my hand up. I don’t like oh, this boy’s looking at me like, ‘she don’t know how to spell’. No. I don’t care about what they say or think because I wanna learn. (Dima, age 15)

Dima later elaborates on this:

...Go for the hard thing and do it... In the end you will get it. You will not like stay forever doing that hard thing and you not getting it, you might not get it from the first time, but mistakes will help. And another time, you will 100% get it right. So do the hard thing...it will give you loads of things, like, the easy thing will not give it to you. (Dima, age 15)

It seems that this approach therefore empowered participants to take opportunities presented to them. There also seemed to be an acknowledgment that things take time and perseverance.

Dima shared what skills she arrived to the UK with:

...I came with like ‘wait, wait, wait, wait. You have to wait’. I learned loads of things like that...don’t give up, calm down always, don’t like just rush anything, just calm down and walk step by step and don’t jump anything. You have to do that, don’t like skip it and do another thing. Do it. And then do the next thing. (Dima, age 15)

Hala (age 14) also echoed this when asked what she learned from the countries she lived in prior to the UK; “passing through difficulty, and patience. You can overcome.”.

One participant attributed these abilities not specifically to adversity related to fleeing the country, but to difficulties of general life in Arab countries:

Living in an Arabic country is not easy at all...I've been facing difficulties in my whole life so...In Syria, there's nothing easy to get. And when I came to here I noticed how the people are very sensitive or weak from the inside...in the Arabic country, we are used to facing these difficulties so we know that this is not the end of the world. It's ok to get rejected. You're gonna get rejected thousands of times til you get accepted one time... (Nour, age 22)

Therefore, it seems that overall, participants' perceptions of life may have shifted as a result of being exposed to adversity throughout life. They seemed to learn something about their capacity to come through adversity and subsequently applied this to how they approached life and the possibility of future challenges. Their experiences emboldened some to take more opportunities presented to them in the UK whilst accepting whichever outcome comes.

Participants not only related differently to adversity and challenge, but also to their values and relationships, as described in the following subcategory.

#### 4.5.2 Subcategory 4B: '[Taking] with us the important things for our lives'

Participants reflected on what they left behind in their country of origin and what they took with them. This may have reorganised priorities and values for some, or possibly brought to the surface what they always deemed important.

We stayed like learning our language, our religion, everything, I came, I put my hijab on, I do my prayers, I do everything for my religion. I don't think that when we came, or like we left our country, that we left everything behind. We took with us the important things for our lives. We did not take our money, our gold or our houses. We took like our culture, what we

have to do, what we have like stay- working hard to stay with us. We did not like leave anything that we really like wanted now. (Dima, age 15)

This quote captures the importance given to possessing and living one's culture, faith and values over possessing materialistic things from their country of origin. Similarly, Hala commented on the value of family over money, after sharing that her family's presence in the UK would be the one thing that would improve her life:

...I don't feel money is very important like family. Like money can come in the future, if you work hard, money will come. (Hala, age 14)

A similar sentiment was also expressed by Nour;

We lost our house, we lost financial things, but not, you know...not people. Because money, it can go back, but when you lose someone, there's nothing that can replace this person that you've lost so always feeling grateful, every day. (Nour, age 22)

These quotes suggest a possible revision of one's values having been confronted with mortality and the temporality of material possessions. Some participants spoke about carrying their values with them from their country of origin. For example, Tareq was asked where he gets his motivation:

Well, my country teach me about that, my culture. They told me to do that, so I'm still working with my culture because my culture was the best, trust me." (Tareq, age 18)

He later added the following when talking about peer pressure experienced in the UK:

My culture taught me like, believe who you are. Don't be, like, don't be another person. Be who you are. (Tareq, age 18)

Other participants spoke about differentiating between their and others' lifestyles:

...personally I don't like the way they live...you know they're my school friends, that's it...  
the way they live it's just not my way I live. (Hossam, age 16)

Through the process of leaving their country of origin and eventually living in the UK, some participants talked about values that became more important:

...we started asking ourselves ...'Why Allah, why God gave us this chance to leave and have another life?' So the first thing that came up on our minds was that my dad was a doctor...my mum always says that qualification is like a weapon. It's gonna protect you. So when the war happened we didn't have anything else now except my dad's certificates. It was the only weapons that we had to allow us to survive.... so my mum kept encouraging us to study really hard, and get very good qualifications, to be able to protect our kids in the future, just like my dad protected us and he gave us the chance to live a better life in [host country]... (Nour, age 22)

Through this meaning-making, this quote suggests that one value became more important to live by, or indeed necessary for survival. This was therefore perhaps another way participants were seeing the world anew.

Most participants spoke about becoming closer with family through their experiences together and appreciating the value of family as a result. Some, like Hanan, indicated a prioritisation of family "But yeah, how did we cope with it? ...I think at the end of it, like now, my family is my number one just because we went through a lot."

Family also seemed to become the source of stability for others, such as Rami; "...some people switch up on you, some won't but no matter what I feel like your family's got you".

Some participants described becoming closer to their family in the context of living in a less stressful environment in the UK, compared with other countries they had lived in:

I don't actually remember doing anything with my family like how I'm doing here. Spending time with them, I don't remember that. It always used to be like really hard, like dad at work from morning to the night, you know? (Hossam, age 16)

Another participant elaborated on this;

I feel like er, our relationship between me and my family has improved a lot after coming to [host country] because my dad used to get really stressed about our future and about what we're gonna do like and stuff, and same with my mum and er, my brothers, everyone was like busy kind of thinking about their future and stuff so everyone would be so stressed out, so whenever I say something or do something it's all just kind of...ten times as stressful or harder (Rami, age 21)

He contrasts this with life in the UK;

...here so now we've got like a better relationship and a better friendship between each other like as a family and we've got like a better bond nowadays as a family because we can talk to each other nowadays and we can go out... (Rami, age 21)

Overall, it seemed that through their experiences, participants had a clearer sense of what matters to them and which relationships and values to hold close. They described spending more time with their families and talking more together, which helped them to feel supported and keep going. One participant expressed a deep valuing of her experiences:

...if I had the chance to choose, for example where I was born, or where I came from, or everything, I would have chosen the same thing because you feel... Because of the things that I've been through, this is what builds my personality and this is what builds who is

[participant name] now...would you choose the same thing... or would you choose just like a normal life, a normal person's life who has been through nothing for example, or has always enjoyed living peacefully and having everything they wanted; having money and having house and having all their loved ones always surrounding them...when I see people like this, they get...they get broken down from the first rejection or from the first shock they have. I thought that no, I want to be who I am, I want to go through hard things because these struggles, these barriers, are making me stronger, and...this life...that we are living now...who stays til the last is the stronger, only strong people who can stay for the last...we say that in Arabic 'Al baqa lel aqua'" (Nour, age 22)

In this new way of seeing and experiencing the world, participants continued making comparisons of their present lives with past difficult experiences. They also seemed to flourish when they were seen in return, as outlined in the following category.

#### 4.6 Category 5: Being seen

This category relates to how some participants spoke about experiences in which they felt the most acknowledged, valued and supported. This was a role mainly played by school, which one participant described as "...if I'm going to be honest, is the best thing that's happened to me in the UK." (Hossam, age 16). The following subcategories are co-constructions of some of the main components that came together to support participants to be seen and feel seen.

##### 4.6.1 Subcategory 5A: Having strengths and needs identified

Some participants shared how teachers recognised some of their strengths and abilities, even before they were aware of these. For example, Dima talked about how career options were opened up to her that she had not even considered:

They say ‘you’re good at science, but...When I see you in your Art lesson, you’re very interested, you like to do new things, you come up with new ideas.’ ...Math, art and product design- I think you’ll be in architecture...’. And then they say ‘just think about it...And if you don’t want it I will work harder with you to be a doctor if you want. (Dima, age 15)

Another participant spoke about how she felt encouraged and acknowledged by school, having had some of the challenges she faced recognised:

They totally appreciate everything I do. And even at school they always, they always made me feel that every small thing I do is big for them. They say ‘[Name], despite the language barrier... you had to adapt to a new education system, you had to learn the language, you had to learn the content and everything new. You had to make new friends and a whole new life, and still you are receiving good grades and you know putting so much effort’ and they always reward me and gave me positive energy and telling me beautiful words such as ‘you’re very good’ and ‘well done’, ‘keep going’. These small things, they makes a very- very big change, very big things from the inside. (Nour, age 22)

She described how the headteacher made an effort to visit her and her siblings’ classes to check on them and offered extra English lessons. Nour referred to this support as ‘small things’ and ‘simple things’ that made a big impact.

Similarly, participants shared how important it was to have their needs identified by teachers:

My school was really really really good. Like, they helped us a lot. You know they see me, I need support with this? They just sent me a teacher...She help me catch up with everyone... That’s when I first joined school and I didn’t really get what the teacher’s saying. You know they did that by themselves... (Hossam, age 16).

Some participants also described ‘being seen’ by organisations. In the following quote, Nour describes someone from an organisation who offered much more than practical support:

...every weekend she go and visit every single refugee house, she just says hi from the outside...Just to make sure that she is giving them the love that she has, she just says ‘I’m here just to say hi and to make sure that you are safe and you don’t need anything else’... [Name] is one of the best people that I have ever met in my life, because she is not only supporting the families, the refugee families with her money, but she is supporting them with her love, with her empathy, with her sympathy, with her, erm, faith, with everything.... These kinds of people here, they make big change in refugees life in the UK. (Nour, age 22)

Together with having their strengths and needs identified, participants spoke of how important it was to them when others proactively took action based on this.

#### 4.6.2 Subcategory 5B: Being proactively offered support

During member-checking, all participants expressed a preference for being offered support without needing to ask, as this came up in many interviews. Some participants suggested that this is how they offer support in their culture, others suggested they would not know what to ask for as the country is new to them. Others also suggested it can be a sensitive issue to ask for help, if they feel rejected or if the families’ financial situation had drastically changed as a result of leaving a country. Hala suggested how this can be done:

Support them without waiting for the young refugees to come and saying we need this thing... The second point is to organise lots of different activities – take them out, to find them new friends here and strengthen their English and feel that they have become part of the country... you asked me about sadness or whatnot, maybe these things will support them – maybe when people provide them with this support, the sadness will go. (Hala, age 14)

She also added:

...maybe this support should be indirect, and light, to avoid raising sensitivity, so they don't feel like they are strangers. (Hala, age 14).

Similarly, Rami highlights the importance to him of being proactive and welcoming:

So it's not like, having help or support available. It's more about like offering it I think and more about like putting it out there but just like showing them that they do have it and that, erm, that they are welcome to have that support". (Rami, age 21)

An example of this was given by Nour, who explained how school were proactively considering her family's circumstances:

Our school was offering us free books, because...they didn't ask us if we can afford that, they just... 'we won't put extra pressure on them, and ask them to pay for the books and for the lab coats'. Or even when they have trips...that we couldn't afford to pay for it, but they say 'you can join us for free'... So they took off the mentally pressure that we can think about and also the financially pressure...The financial stress that we had'... So the school is one of the biggest supports not only for the kids but for the families as well because I know the families are struggling... (Nour, age 22)

For other participants, proactive support took the form of being offered help and friendship, which they found touching:

I stayed six years in [host country], I did not have a- a girlf- like, a friend...Here, from the first year in school, all girls like start coming to me 'do you want help?', 'do you want to sit with us for lunch?', 'do you want to come and walk with us in break?', 'I'll tell you where you go'. I'm like...who is these? Why are they doing that to me? They just help for nothing. ... I have so many friends at school! That like, they actually like me. We are close friends! Like, I never had a close friend in [host country]. (Dima, age 15)

The idea of being approached with support was also appreciated by other participants, such as Hossam: "...But in England **they** talk to you...they all try to help all the time, I like that.". When one participant shared that refugees can feel different in the UK, his response about what people can do was "...smile in their faces" (Tareq, age 18). It was such gestures that seemed to go a long way in making young refugees feel welcome.

Proactive support also took the form of being made to feel accepted and included. During member-checking, a few participants highlighted that this was not always their experience, but something they hope for, for other young refugees. Hanan recalled how a friend forgot where she was from, which made her so happy. Being seen beyond the label of 'Syrian' or 'refugee' made a big difference to Hanan, given her previous experiences:

...it's just made me like included and not seen as 'the refugee - I feel bad for you and your country' kinda thing." (Hanan, age 19)

There were other ways that she felt seen and accepted:

I don't drink because of my religion...And everyone is like, they accept it, like we play games and stuff, and everyone's drinking...and they're like 'oh [name] play' you know and they add like rules...they apply to me not to drinking, you know? So it's just that way of them accepting the fact that I don't drink makes me feel like part of them. (Hanan, age 19)

She also added:

...when they be like to me 'oh don't change your accent' – I always comment because I do have an accent... And they're like 'oh yeah but don't change your accent you're fine the way you are'. (Hanan, age 19)

Therefore, this subcategory of being proactively offered support encapsulates the important idea for young refugees of being approached with and proactively offered support in a welcoming way, having their circumstances sensitively accounted for and being offered friendship; being seen and acknowledged for who they are as a person, rather than the label placed on them.

Category 5 'Being seen' is positioned centrally in the model, with other categories flowing out of it, demonstrating other important processes that subsequently followed for participants who described being seen.

#### 4.7 Category 6: Being protected from racism and bullying

Over a third of participants emphasised the impact of bullying and racism on young refugees, from their own experiences, and stressed the importance of tackling this in schools in the UK. Again, support discussed in this section is more related to what is hoped for rather than what was received. For example, when asked about the most important thing that needed to happen for young refugees to follow their dreams, one participant answered:

One thing, stop the racism. And second thing is make sure the young refugees don't get bullied in school about their culture...school should make sure they are safe. (Tareq, age 18)

Tareq had experienced racism and marginalisation, which made him feel excluded and dehumanised:

Sometimes like being a refugee in that country [UK] sometimes can let you to feel different, not normal person. Because sometimes they're treating you like an animal, for example, or something like that... (Tareq, age 18)

This therefore links back to the previous subcategory in relation to offering acceptance and a sense of belonging. Similarly, one participant's response regarding choosing anything that would improve his life was "to get rid of bullying and racism. There's racism here.. and have a normal life." (Fadi, age 17). Karam's response was similar; "no more racism."

A suggestion for what action could be taken to protect young refugees from bullying was as follows:

Get someone from school who is not racist who is happy to help to show them and teach them...Students who bully and are racist, put them in a school, for example, to teach them not to do this. (Fadi, age 17)

Therefore, this subcategory shows how strongly some participants felt about ensuring protection is in place by schools from racism and bullying, given their own experiences. The GT model indicates how, if participants were 'being seen', then protection from bullying and racism would naturally follow by those supporting them. This is also the case for the following category.

#### 4.8 Category 7: Being connected to people with shared backgrounds

This category illustrates the importance of participants connecting with people of a shared background in relation to culture and language. Participants spoke about the different ways this was important to them:

...I have friends at school. But they don't have the same mind as me. Not the same culture... It's always different so I think if I had some of my family here, it would be the best thing...Something that like they know everything about you...You will like talk about more private things you can't talk with friends at school when you like have a family problem, like,

you can't solve it together... Like everything like that. It makes life more easier. (Dima, age 15)

Such yearning for a shared mindset and not having to explain oneself was also expressed by Nour;

when you talk with someone, who is from the same background, he has the same feeling, the same thoughts, he knows what does it mean when you talk, he understands every word that you say because he's been through the same thing and he knows exactly how is it like there in Syria..., They like, they... *y3awadny, ta3weed* [meaning *compensate me, compensation*]. They make me feel much better...- they know the feeling, and they know how I am feeling towards these things. (Nour, age 22)

Both Nour and Dima acknowledged that they have friends in the UK, but that having contact with people who shared their background fulfilled a different need for them, perhaps a need to feel understood or have effortless interactions and friendship with others.

Another participant spoke about how they gravitated towards people who shared the same language and traditions in the host country:

It was easier to communicate with them ...for example when I joke with them they understand the humour. (Anas, age 22)

Again, Anas highlighted here the ease of being in such company. Similarly, another participant shared how initially they had no friends until a few families came from their country of origin. He stated "...we started to go and visit and communicate with them, like in Iraq" (Karam, age 15). This shows how for some, such connections were perhaps a nostalgic link to their country of origin.

For other participants, connection with families who shared some of their identities allowed for valuable support and reassurance. One participant described a daytrip that was organised by an organisation:

I think that trip made a huge difference in their mental health. They had a lovely time all together, and we were just...laughing... All the refugee families were trying to support each other and telling them that we have to be stronger, it's ok, we, you know, we're all going through the same things you're going through, so just reassuring...we're going through the same thing. (Nour, age 22)

Similarly, Dima shared how meeting someone with shared experiences helped:

... when we sit and talk, I feel like someone went through the exact same thing I went through, so I say like it really helped having people with the exact same backgrounds because you share most of the bad things together! So I think that really helps. It makes you feel that it's not...just you. (Dima, age 15)

Support offered by people who have been through similar challenges was also important to Hossam, who described how he benefitted from meeting local Arab families;

...we're not that many Arabic families around here. So we all know each other. And this guy... he teach us... like me and my friend we wanna do IT so he teach us that, and he teach us Quran (Hossam, age 16).

The sharing of skills, experience as well as religious teaching was something that Hossam seemed to benefit from in this instance.

Therefore, being connected to people who shared their culture, traditions and language seemed to provide participants with effortless interactions, friendship, solidarity, a link to the country of origin as well as being a valued source of guidance and support. This was co-constructed with participants as a result of being seen, as is the case for the following category.

#### 4.9 Category 8: Making new connections

A proportion of participants shared that it is important for them to form connections with people who do not share their background in the UK. This was sometimes spoken about as a way of moving forward and fully embracing one's current context. For example, in the following quote, Rita shared her thoughts about waiting for her friends and family to come to the UK:

...I know 99% it's hard for them to come here, so if I stay like in the same idea of 'I'd like it if my cousins or friends came', it would be so hard on me, and I wouldn't be able to move on, so ...rather than that, I'm so grateful that there's [online platforms] we can talk at any time...but that doesn't mean I stop my life here because life moves on. (Rita, age 24)

She went on:

...but here I like meeting new people, building new friendships and get to know the cultures because honestly it's very interesting...maybe we'll be friends forever or maybe just learn something from them. (Rita, age 24)

This was also echoed by Cordelia:

...it's always good to look to different cultures and communities, not only like your one.  
(Cordelia, age 17)

Another participant spoke about a definitive moment that her family decided to ‘live the life now’:

We kept thinking about going back and our souls just kept in Syria, we were not living in [host country] that’s why we were not engaging with the community there or making new friends, or making a social life...That’s why my mum decided that we have to turn off the TV and cut off the internet because we need to live the life now, we need to be here. We need to focus on ourselves, on building ourselves and strengthening ourselves to be able to move on. (Nour, age 22)

Nour acknowledged how the hope of returning to Syria may impact on them being fully present where they are:

We started making friends with the native people there... that’s where we started trying to learn their culture, what do they like, what the food, what’s the traditional food for example, trying to visit them. We made some friends with lots of [host country] families and we started visiting them, inviting them to our house, teaching them our culture, how do we dress up, what do we eat and how do we talk, you know, that’s how we engaged with them. (Nour, age 22)

Making friends was also important for Hala, to cope with being in a new country:

We tried to strive in making new friendships with the new people from [host country] ... I tried my best in making friends...from a psychological perspective [you feel] like you are one of them as well. I stopped feeling like a stranger. (Hala, age 14)

Overall, it seemed that both being connected to people of the same background and making new connections were not mutually exclusive, but rather required a conscious, active effort:

It's really important to have someone who speaks my language and knows my culture, yes it's really important, but I also think it's really important to start new relationships with other people and get to know the cultures... (Rita, age 24)

Participants also spoke about new connections as learning or discoveries they had made in the UK or other host countries, which helped them:

...I did not know what depression was like until I came here. So people started telling me about it, you know, anxiety, um it's like we mention it but we don't actually learn about it so I don't have that awareness of it you know what I mean? ...then in England I was able to make – kinda connections between them, you know...(Hanan, age 19)

Others, such as Anas, discovered strategies online that he reported to find helpful, such as meditation and going to the gym. He added that the UK helped him discover “that we have to make our mental health in great shape.” (Anas, age 22).

Therefore, this subcategory speaks to the importance that some participants placed on making an effort to build new relationships and explore new cultures; partly to live in the present and feel part of a new society, but also because it is enjoyable. It also speaks to the new connections in the form of bringing together past and current learning about what personally helps them, which they may have felt encouraged to explore.

#### 4.10 Category 9: Being shown ways of living in UK

Most participants spoke about how it made a significant difference to them to be introduced to ways of living in the UK. The kind of guidance varied, but there was consensus that it was needed. Based on his experience, Rami was advocating for more guidance:

They need to get a lot more, like guidance...at times it was very hard because everything was like strange and everything was just...new to me... (Rami, age 21)

He felt that guidance should be on many levels, including to help young refugees achieve their general life goals:

...support and guidance...towards...what you need to do for you to achieve the next step in your plan...And if they don't have a plan how to help them have a plan and how to help them discover what they want in life and stuff like that. (Rami, age 21)

Other participants spoke about practical guidance for day to day living. For example, Karam spoke about how their neighbours showed them the local area:

They would visit us regularly, they would tell us this butcher is better than this one, they would advise us. (Karam, age 15)

Similarly, Nour spoke about the invaluable practical support her uncle (who was living in the UK) provided them with:

...he knows exactly how to manage, he knows how to rent a house, to buy food, to get your kids into schools, to get a good electricity supply to the house, all these forms, and dealing with the mails that we never never dealt with...He taught me how to write an email, how to respond to a mail, how to complete a form, he taught us all that so having someone that's been here, and you know just being with you, teach you how to deal with all these new stuff. (Nour, age 22)

For other participants, guidance in school was the most crucial. One participant expressed that she would have benefitted from a bit more specific explanation and guidance about the education system:

So I really wanted to do A-levels, but my maths was like, like I didn't know what I have to get to get it, you know, so maybe explaining it more, saying what options I have, and not waiting til I was like year eleven... I wished that they helped me with that... Or like, what do I have to do to get good grades in an English essay – you know?...it's really tiny and small and probably doesn't take a long time, but it really affected and it helps... (Nour, age 22)

Similarly, Anas suggested getting someone from school or university to guide young refugees to show them “which A-levels they need to do and how to get to the university they want” (Anas, age 22).

Other participants referred more to support in being shown around school. Hossam spoke of receiving support which helped; “...supporting me...putting someone with me telling me where I need to go what I need to do. Like a friend – that I'm with in all lessons.”

Guidance also extended to social life for some participants. Rami spoke about how to reduce feelings of alienation:

They need to catch up with a whole lot of social life...they haven't seen the same TV shows that an English kid has seen in his childhood...So that creates a little bit of a gap, that's just an example of the many things that create gaps between young refugees and natives of the country... A meme on Instagram – an English person could understand it, a young – a new refugee for example might not... (Rami, age 21)

Similarly, another participant suggested how companionship and exploration of the area may be the biggest support:

Be friends with them. Go out with them. Let them like not feel lonely all the time, be with them, you know? Travel with them like around [county name] or something, and go visit some cities in England. (Tareq, age 18)

This last quote highlights how the social interaction matters, as well as the guidance itself.

Rita also shared this viewpoint:

...it's so good that you know someone who is living here. You can search it online, you can google it, but it's not the same as someone who's here...it's nice and also it's trusting and building a new relationship with people... (Rita, age 24)

Therefore, guidance by other people related to educational and career goals, practical day to day living, exploration of places and socialising. During member checking, participants highlighted how this process then allows for making new connections. Participants highlighted the interdependent relationship between this subcategory, the previous subcategory and the next subcategory; improving English language.

#### 4.11 Category 10: Improving English language

Learning and improving the English language was spoken about by the majority of participants as a big challenge, and an area they wish was improved. It was described by Nour as “a huge one of the main struggles” and “the main barrier for people that come here”. Like other participants, Nour spoke about how her and her siblings had to work extra hard to be on the same level as other students, which sometimes meant only getting around three hours of sleep:

...we had to put the double effort that a normal student is putting because everyday we come back from school we had to translate everything we've had...translate it in our minds to

English and then memorising those English words and learning those English... (Nour, age 22)

Anas, among others, shared that one thing that would improve his life in the UK is “to learn English better”. This was to “speak and communicate with others” (Anas). Other participants had other reasons to improve their English language, such as Hossam, who also answered that this would be the one thing that would improve his life;

If I had full English right now I could be...really good...I would just be so confident. For everything I wanna do. Like in class when I wanna answer. I know the answer and I’m a hundr- like 200% sure that this is the right answer, but I don’t say it, cos I’m kinda scared to like, you know, maybe this I say it the wrong way - even if the right answer. (Hossam, age 16)

Participants linked improving their English language with making new connections and being shown the ways of living in the UK, and the interdependent relationships between them:

Having English friends, talking to them not just in school outside of school, being close to them...they make you more confident when they talk to you and they make you see that they understand you. So you be more confident to talk in school like that. (Dima)

Fadi also made this link, in explaining how friendships in the UK help:

They help strengthen your language skills, and help you integrate with the society. And, you’d have friends! (Fadi, age 17)

Finally, two participants specifically talked about their role in translating the English language during appointments or paperwork for their parents. Therefore, improving English language was a wish Hanan had for her parents:

...if my parents had like if they become fluent in English they'd be so much happier...because they always have like the need to ask us to do like government papers and stuff...so I think if they have the...English, it will make them really happy. (Hanan, age 19)

In summary, participants shared how learning and improving their English language was a considerable challenge, but through its improvement, relationships were built and confidence started building. Participants agreed that they could benefit from more of this support, either formally through courses or extra lessons, or informally through relationships. As a result, they spoke about how these processes helped develop their adaptability to different environments.

#### 4.12 Category 11: Developing adaptability

When considering the main things that helped to keep going in the UK, many spoke about developing an ability to adapt, not only to the UK but to any situations as well as developing independence. As part of developing that ability to adapt, they highlighted learning to ask for help. These have therefore been co-constructed as the two subcategories of this category.

##### 4.12.1 Subcategory 11A: Gaining independence skills

This subcategory relates to skills that participants spoke about having to develop in the absence of access to something else. When participants spoke about gaining independence skills, it seemed this was unintentional, but rather skills they needed to adapt to their new environment. Rami described this:

One of the bigger things that I've picked up in the UK...[is] kind of having to self-reliance and self-independence...To cook that food, to go and grab this thing from the shop, from the supermarket... being in the UK I feel like, it was less – there was less of a sense of community and there was like especially towards the start ... So that makes it hard to...have

like, help from others and to rely on others and get or ask for help from others. So you kind of just have to rely on yourself in a way sometimes... (Rami, age 21)

In a similar way, Hala describes a learning process in the UK:

I tried it many times, that I can't rely on the people, I have to rely on myself. Help myself by myself. (Hala, age 14)

Some participants drew comparisons between countries and recognised what skills and abilities help them in each context. For example, Fadi shared that he came to this realisation in relation to bullying:

...the skills that I used to use abroad did not help. The things that I used to adopt abroad did not work here... The new skills I learned here is to go and report it straight away to the teacher... (Fadi, age 17)

Whilst this skill of independence arose from adverse circumstances, participants spoke about it as valuable. During member checking, participants shared that this was how they developed adaptability.

#### 4.12.2 Subcategory 11B: Learning to ask for help

Two participants in particular highlighted how over time in the UK, they learned the importance of asking when they need help. They both related this back to recognising this as a personal responsibility to help themselves. Hanan described how this was something she learned to do in the UK:

...reaching out for help...I never used to do it. And I learned it from here cos...if you don't ask for it it's not gonna come to you. People don't know your feelings you have to tell the

about it. So that is a very important one...I like that I'm more open about it now – so I don't have to struggle alone. (Hanan, age 19)

Hanan also applied the same idea to asking for help in an education setting, which she found to be an important way for her to access available help. Dima describes a similar realisation process and advocates for taking opportunities to ask for help:

Ask for help always. Like don't be shy to ask for help because when you be shy, don't ask for help, you're not gonna understand the thing...This is your chance, you have to ask... (Dima, age 15)

Therefore, this was another way that some participants adjusted how they approached situations in the UK, having learned what they need to do to get their needs met or work towards their goals.

Participants indicated that for them, the result of all of these interacting processes discussed so far meant that they wished to give, or give back in some form.

#### 4.13 Category 12: Giving and giving back

Most participants shared that it was important to give. This was either discussed as a future intention and aspiration or something they were currently finding meaning in doing. Some participants spoke about the idea of 'giving' being important to do, whilst most participants spoke of 'giving back' being important; this had different meanings for different participants.

For some, 'giving back' related to being able to repay people who invested in them, including family or people who showed support to them in the UK. For example, Rami drew his

motivation for succeeding in the future from his wish to repay his family and make them proud:

...I just want to repay them, that's one thing that kind of keeps me going...I just want to...go forward and succeed in life and show them that they didn't do things in vain, erm, that it wasn't pointless, that – that...I want them to feel proud of us...and I want to like repay them for the efforts that they've put in...(Rami, age 21)

For Rami, repaying his family was for them to see him have a career, family and income that can support his parents too. This would make them happy which in turn would made him happy: "...seeing like, your parents for example, happy for you and stuff is another – just kind of, brings joy and stuff like, seeing your close friends and your family happy" (Rami, age 21).

This motivation to make parents proud was also shared by Hossam, who described being motivated to impress his dad with his programming skills:

All the time to my dad I'm always like 'look, I know how to do this and this and this'. Cos he knows if this thing good enough... he tells me 'that's a good thing. That's a hard thing for people to learn, and you got it.' So that's why I try and show him. (Hossam, age 16)

For these participants, their families' happiness and pride seemed closely tied with theirs.

Fadi summarises this reciprocal relationship in response to what made him feel better:

Seeing my family happy...this helps. To see us better or to see us...without problems. (Fadi, age 17)

Dima also spoke about the positive impact on her of others investing in her, and how she in turn wants to make this worth their while:

Because it make you feel that...I'm not gonna give up because there's loads of people trying to help me...But when they see that I did do something...they be happy because when they helped me that help did not just go on the floor. It all became something. (Dima, age 15)

Other participants, through their experiences, shared how they felt compelled to give to others. Tareq wanted to ensure no young refugee experiences the racism and bullying he experienced:

...if...I heard he's from Syria, he's a refugee, I'm going to support him. I'm going to stay in his back. I'll never going to let him to feel different or something...I'd swear to do the best I can do to make him more like, more strong, more happy in his life. (Tareq, age 18)

Karam (age 15) also shared that what would improve his life in the UK would be to “help poor people” which he said became important to him through his life experiences. Rita also shared that she would want to be connected with other young refugees from a similar background to check they are ok and “make people not feel alone”.

This subcategory shows the significant meaning of giving and giving back for the majority of participants. They had different reasons for giving to different people, and what this entailed was different for each person, but engaging in this or aspiring to this seemed to bring participants a sense of motivation and happiness.

#### 4.14 Category 13: Recognising a promising future

Some participants also seemed to find motivation in the possibility of a promising future, that seemed within their reach.

For example, Hossam made comparisons about his motivation to study between a host country and the UK:

...I knew it was going nowhere. My dad knew it was going nowhere.... But when we came to the UK. I was the one actually hyped and just wanna do everything, you know, go back home study. I know in this country if you wanna get good grades, that's the way you get a good future. So that's what I wanna do. (Hossam, age 16)

He goes onto add what perhaps made his hope of the future more tangible:

And here...I talk to like so many people that are doing IT right now. And they're just working in good jobs and that. So the way they're telling me, it's all about studying. So that's why I wanna study. Cos I know if you study you have a future. (Hossam, age 16)

For Hossam, it seemed that seeing others from a similar background doing the job he wants made a difference; "they're telling me how the way they came here beyond my age they started studying that's how they got there, and that's what I wanna do." (Hossam, age 16).

Other participants recognised what they have access to compared to other countries; "... I have lots of opportunities in England, you know" (Hanan, age 19). Some participants were made aware of the possibilities through others, as Nour describes:

... my uncle told me...he said 'I'm teaching people who are older than you' so don't be scared if you are now older than the other students, because you always have the chance. There's never a limit here or a no works for anything, you can do anything you want...and that's the things that make me, you know, feel more encouraged to... keep going on. (Nour, age 22)

Therefore, being made aware of opportunities combined with seeing that it is possible for them to reach these opportunities energised participants to keep going in desired directions.

#### 4.15 Summary

The categories that have been presented, together with their relationships and interrelationships and their positioning in the GT model, reflect a co-construction between participants, the researcher and the supervisory team. These seemed to be the most important processes for participants to keep going, though it is important to note that not every participant experienced every aspect of this model, but for some of the categories, (such as 5 and 6) expressed their hope for future young refugees to experience. Results will now be summarised and discussed in relation to the literature.

## Chapter 5 Discussion

In this chapter, links are made between the research findings and existing empirical literature, theoretical concepts and models. Following this, clinical, research and policy implications are discussed and the quality of the research evaluated. Finally, conclusions, reflections and suggestions for future directions are presented.

### 5.1 Overview of results

The current research study aimed to explore: *What processes nurture resilience for young refugees living in the UK?*

A tentative model was constructed from interviews with twelve participants. The model proposes that some processes that nurture resilience long preceded arrival to the UK. Results also suggest that processes were dynamic, reciprocal, and interdependent. Most processes were relational, which in return continually redefined their sense of self and relationships.

Participants described ‘seeing the world anew’ which related to a re-appraisal of life, values, and relationships through their experiences. This new way of seeing and being in the world interlinked with ‘being seen’. From a position of ‘being seen’, participants could then be protected from racism and bullying, connect to people who shared their backgrounds and through being shown ways of living in the UK, could make new connections whilst improving their English language. Participants linked these processes to developing adaptability. Through all of these processes, participants spoke about finding it important to give or give back. Finally, they also described anticipating a future which they could recognise as promising and reachable.

## 5.2 Relevance of the findings to the literature

Each category and subcategory will be discussed in relation to theoretical or empirical connections, both from the SLR and wider literature.

### 5.2.1 Seeking out rest and relief to go on

This broad category connects with the construct of “recovery capital” (Bensimon et al., 2018, p. 3). Recovery capital comprises resources from various life experiences accumulated over time (Bensimon et al., 2018). This includes human, physical, social and cultural resources (Cloud & Granfield, 2008). This construct will be revisited in the following sections.

#### 5.2.1.1 *Taking shelter in hope*

Participants spoke of hope as protective; something that seemed to relieve them of present pain through envisioning a possible future. This is reminiscent of Charmaz’s (1991) ideas on anchoring oneself in different timeframes to cope with difficulties. Such hope-related processes of envisioning the future have been identified as important forms of ‘personal capital’ that help during threat and deprivation (Bensimon et al., 2018). This was found to be extremely important for refugee youth (Nalkur, 2009). Certain Western individualistic constructs, such as ‘learned optimism’ (Seligman, 1990) place importance on having a ‘positive mindset’ in harsh life conditions over cultural and contextual aspects of hoping. Nalkur (2009) found that in the least stable living contexts, effective agents of hope for young refugees were supportive relationships and resources, such as safety, shelter and belonging rather than the self (Nalkur, 2009). Hope has also been described as relational, an activity people do together (Weingarten, 2010).

From the SLR, one study highlighted the importance of hope, which was described as a relational process, including at a communal level (Spiteri, 2012). There is therefore support in the literature for the importance of ‘hope’ during adversity, which may be constructed differently according to culture and context.

#### *5.2.1.2 Protecting fun*

Participants spoke of ‘disconnecting’ from current difficulties and engaging in fun as relief from problems. The idea of ‘protecting’ and therefore making space for fun, is mirrored in previous research that considers children who have fled violence to have experienced a loss of childhood and innocence (Poretti et al., 2013). Subsequently, the focus for some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has been to restore childhood and recreate a sense of ‘normality’ (Gatter, 2017). This ties in closely with this finding of the present study.

However, the literature also warns against imposing Western understandings of childhood, or perceiving children as passive victims rather than resourceful active agents (Boyden, 2003).

The concepts of childhood and normality therefore need to be placed in their cultural and social context to understand their meaning to young refugees.

#### *5.2.1.3 Drawing meaning and comfort from religion*

Participants spoke about how religion gave them reasons to keep going; it provided meaning, hope, stability and comfort, and for some was a family ritual that sustained them. This subcategory connects with the SLR findings on the importance of religion.

Literature on PTG suggests a strong correlation between religion or spirituality and PTG, with less clarity on causality (Shaw et al., 2007). These ideas also resonate with Viktor Frankl’s work on humanity’s propensity towards spirituality and meaning-seeking (Wong,

2014). Quoting Nietzsche's statement of "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how", Frankl emphasised how meaning is essential for coping and resilience (Wong, 2014). According to Frankl, one could say that through adversity, participants responded to an innate spiritual need for self-transcendence, redirecting their focus from themselves to something bigger and beyond themselves, and through this experienced meaning in life (Wong, 2014).

#### *5.2.1.4 Leaning on community like family*

Findings in the present study suggest that participants drew support from close, family-like relationships with their communities. This provided them with reliable support, hope and a communal sharing of life that they valued.

It is often stated that in collectivist societies, extended family and community make up the fabric of society (Pettys & Balgopal, 2018). The collective's needs and goals are often prioritised above the individual's (Haj-Yahia & Sadan, 2008). It is such characteristics that participants may have been referring to when describing community as 'like family'. Other research has also noted refugees experiencing their ethnic communities, or communities with shared experience, as extended family (Weng & Lee, 2016). This could be described as 'social capital', since it signifies membership of a social group which allows for access to resources, particularly during crises (Bensimon et al., 2018). Two studies in the SLR highlighted the importance of social support. This was in the context of support from a formal mentor (Thommessen et al., 2015) or through talking to others (Sutton et al., 2006).

However, less research has investigated the important roles that communities played in refugees' countries of origin and how this translates in host countries. Morrice (2007) makes a distinction between social capital for day-to-day living in a host country, and advantageous

forms of social capital regarding certain kinds of knowledge, such as how to write a personal statement for university, which may not be accessible but may be crucial for young refugees' goals (Morrice, 2007). It is therefore important to consider these important roles, to determine what forms of support may be most meaningful.

### 5.2.2 Family togetherness sustaining

Being with family, both immediate and extended, seemed to provide stability, and alleviate fears. Participants described the role of family as irreplaceable throughout their journeys and in the UK.

From the SLR findings, five of seven studies focused on experiences of unaccompanied refugee minors. The remaining two studies highlighted protective and promotive qualities of family relationships. In one study, family support included guiding young refugees' social development, maintaining connection with their heritage and encouraging them with education (Bennouna et al., 2019). The other study by Sleijpen et al. (2017) discussed 'perceiving support from peers and parents' as positively influencing resilience of participants. Parents were spoken about as confidants who offered support and comfort (Sleijpen et al., 2017). The findings in this study therefore support the literature on the importance of family, and extend this by capturing how family offered stability and support.

### 5.2.3 Comparing difficult experiences

Most participants made comparisons of difficult experiences. This was also found in Groark et al. (2010). In both studies, participants tended to make favourable comparisons between experiences in the UK and elsewhere. This has been referred to as a cognitive coping strategy of adaptively reappraising adversities linked with resilience (Walther et al., 2021). This

strategy of ‘positive reappraisal’ (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) has been reported to be a correlate of, but conceptually distinct from PTG (Rzeszutek & Gruszczyńska, 2018). The process of making comparisons tied closely with the following category, ‘seeing the world anew’.

#### 5.2.4 Seeing the world anew

This category relates to participants’ descriptions about how experiences of adversity changed their approach to situations and relationships. The theoretical constructs of PTG (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) and AAD (Papadopoulos, 2001) will be drawn on in the following subcategories.

##### *5.2.4.1 Relating differently to adversity and challenge*

Participants described having a different way of relating to challenges to their peers and an openness to both future challenges and opportunities. Papadopoulos (2007) discusses the emergence of a ‘new epistemology’ in AAD which comprises new perceptions of oneself, one’s relationships and one’s meaning and purpose in life. This new way of understanding, speaking, and relating to oneself, others, and life (Papadopoulos, 2007) seems to be a similar process to that described by participants. Similarly, these findings also connect with PTG aspects relating to ‘identifying new possibilities for one’s life’ and ‘increased perception of personal strength’ (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2014).

##### *5.2.4.2 ‘[Taking] with us the important things for our lives’*

Participants shared which values and relationships became more important to them and how this helped them go forward. This connects with the PTG aspect of ‘improved relationships with others’ and ‘enhanced appreciation for life’. It also overlaps with the ‘new

epistemology' in AAD (Papadopoulos, 2007), particularly the new perceptions of relationships. However, it is worth also noting contextual factors highlighted. Through comparison-making, participants acknowledged access to resources such as safety and education and how this significantly alleviated family stress and pressure, in turn improving relationships. This was not an explicit theme constructed from the SLR and therefore adds another dimension to our thinking about PTG and AAD, highlighting the importance of availability of resources as a contextual factor. It links more closely with Ungar et al.'s (2008) research on the relevance of access to material resources in relation to resilience.

#### 5.2.5 Being seen

This category plays a central role in the model in that it mediates most of the processes outlined. 'Being seen' is not a clearly defined phrase and may have multiple meanings. In this research, the intended meaning can be captured when one considers its opposite or absence; not being seen, being 'othered' or erased. As Safi (2017) stated in his essay:

...when we are unseen, invisible, we become less. Less than human. This *not* being seen has consequences...it has communal consequences. It has institutional and economic consequences, as well as moral and spiritual ones.

This category therefore relates to ideas of identity and belonging on different levels, through being noticed, acknowledged, valued and supported proactively.

##### 5.2.5.1 *Having strengths and needs recognised*

Participants spoke about how teachers identified their strengths, helping them consider career options and were offered care and additional support. This possibly reconnects with gaining access to advantageous forms of social capital (Morrice, 2007). However, this would

underplay the impact of these relationships, as expressed by participants during interviews. Social capital is often presented as a means for achieving an end, being personal goal attainment (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009), whereas it does not consider the importance of the means in and of itself. What these relationships seemed to be communicating to participants is that they are important. Ungar et al. (2008)'s seven factors for resilience include 'positive relationships with significant others within and outside the family' and 'identity' (Ungar et al., 2008). Identity was described by Ungar et al. (2008) as a "personal and collective sense of purpose, self-appraisal of strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, beliefs and values, including spiritual and religious identification" (p. 9). It is therefore important that such holistic aspects of young refugees are acknowledged, explored and accounted for, as described by participants. In other words, they are seen.

Interpersonal relationships developed in educational spaces are seen to be key, particularly for young people who experienced social upheaval and violence (Fingerle & Wink, 2020). They bring feelings of comfort, trust, belonging, love, care and compassion (Ungar et al., 2008). This fits more with some participants' accounts of what they found helpful in relationships outside of the family. The SLR findings highlight the importance of support from peers, friendships, education and religion, but not to this novel holistic idea of 'being seen' and the interconnection between relationships and identities.

#### *5.2.5.2 Being proactively offered support*

Participants indicated a strong preference for being approached with support rather than requesting it. This included indirect support, informal peer support, relieving financial pressures and offering friendship, acceptance and belonging. This finding was not highlighted in the SLR papers or wider literature, to the researcher's knowledge, and is therefore a novel

finding and important contribution to the literature. It places an important new focus on the processes and ways of offering support to young refugees.

The SLR did highlight the importance of acceptance and belonging. Participants in this study appreciated not being labelled as a ‘refugee’ but being seen and known for who they are, including their background, beliefs, and values, and be accepted and included for this. An intensified need to belong has been pointed out in relation to young people who leave their countries at a young age (Danico & University of California, 2004). In the UK, labels ascribed to displaced people carry negative stereotypes and connotations that hinder them and others from recognising their true selves (Solomon Kebede, 2010), in other words, from being seen.

Participants’ descriptions of interactions that made a significant difference, such as being smiled at or invited to lunch, can be described as ‘small stories’ (Tovares, 2010). These are under-represented narrative activities that may appear as ordinary small incidents, but are used to construct identities in interaction (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Social perceptions and interactions therefore can play a powerful role in the formation of one’s identities and thus are important to attend to for young refugees.

#### 5.2.6 Being protected from racism and bullying

Participants spoke about bullying related to racism and xenophobia. This finding is consistent with previous findings that racism and discrimination hinder refugee people’s resilience (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). Bennouna et al. (2019) reported that participants’ experiences of bullying and microaggressions inhibited their sense of belonging. Other papers may not have explored this as they primarily explored factors that promote resilience.

Racism and bullying were found to be key issues identified by refugee parents as affecting performance of their children at school (Manyena & Brady, 2006, as cited in Mohamed & Thomas, 2017). The present findings are therefore consistent with previous literature highlighting this as a crucial area to be addressed (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017).

#### 5.2.7 Being connected to people with shared backgrounds

Participants specified that being in touch with people who had similarities in ethnic identity, language or experiences was important for the sense of effortlessness, familiarity, support and for sharing resources. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) highlighted the importance of social support by people who shared similar experience for adopting new perspectives and developing more adaptive schema integration. Thommessen et al. (2015) also briefly noted participants finding support in friendships with people who had similar experiences.

Having access to such communities is dependent on where refugees are placed and the ‘integration’ policies in place. The UK Home Office’s revised Indicators of Integration (IoI) framework considers integration to be multi-dimensional, multi-directional and context-specific (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). It outlines four types of indicators of integration, including social connections and distinguishes between three types of social connections; social bonds, social bridges and social links wherein social bonds refers to connections with others with a shared sense of identity (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). On the other hand, the UK ‘dispersal policy’ has meant that asylum seekers are dispersed across the UK, to places where they may not have access to communities with a shared identity. The policy also automatically brands them as a burden rather than an asset (Morrice, 2007). This will be revisited in the implications section.

### 5.2.8 Making new connections

Some participants also expressed the importance of making new connections in relation to new relationships and coping strategies.

Supportive friendships were also reported to be important in the SLR. Findings showed that they played a key role in orienting and supporting the adjustment of young refugees, in overcoming language barriers and microaggressions as well as supporting a sense of belonging (Bennouna et al., 2019). These links were also made by participants; making new connections was interlinked with being shown the ways of living in the UK and improving the English language, which also fed into ‘developing adaptability’.

### 5.2.9 Being shown the ways of living in the UK

Participants indicated that what helped considerably was to be shown around, both physically and in terms of navigating new places, processes, and social interactions. Other research has also highlighted the value of understanding the ‘British system’ in the form of practical day to day knowledge (Tip et al., 2020). This reconnects with Morrice’s (2007) ideas around different types of social capital. However, as before, this perhaps underestimates the value of relationships formed in the process.

A recent report described the interdependence of these specific factors; in making intergroup contacts, refugees need to first learn to operate their new context practically (Collyer et al., 2018). Intergroup contact improves English language proficiency and in turn leads to making further contacts (Collyer et al., 2018).

#### 5.2.10 Improving English language

Participants agreed that this is a significant barrier for young refugees and their families that often held them back educationally and socially.

Whilst most participants reported that they received additional English language support through schools, some indicated that their experience was different to other young refugees.

It is well-documented that English language proficiency is important for refugee self-reliance and integration (Morrice et al., 2021; Sharples & Camara, 2020). At present, only those awarded settled status in the UK are able to access English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses (Karyotis et al., 2020). In addition, cuts to funding of ESOL classes has meant more structural barriers to access these for refugees (Morrice et al., 2021). Findings of the current study build on the literature by demonstrating the interdependent relationship between improving English language proficiency, having the confidence to participate in school, building connections and being oriented to the country for young refugees.

#### 5.2.11 Developing Adaptability

This category links to the previous three interlinked categories: ‘making new connections’, ‘being shown the ways of living in the UK’ and ‘Improving English language’. It is through this interaction that participants discussed being able to develop ‘adaptability’.

##### *5.2.11.1 Gaining independence skills*

As found in the SLR themes, participants gave importance to developing independence skills in the UK. This seemed to develop as a result of not having others to rely on. It has been understood as a way of coping with experiences over which young refugees had little control

(Groark et al., 2011). Such development of ‘autonomy and control’, as described in the literature, was linked with a sense of pride and confidence for what they have dealt with independently (Sleijpen et al., 2017). This concept was also linked with ‘self-efficacy’ (Sutton et al., 2006). Whilst the SLR and wider literature suggested that this can be gained through religion (Ní Raghallaigh, 2011b), performing at school and gaining knowledge (Sleijpen et al., 2017; Groark et al., 2011), the present study’s findings also introduce the link with improving their English language and the interdependent relationship with the other categories previously discussed.

#### *5.2.11.2 Learning to ask for help*

Some participants highlighted how learning to ask for help was important, particularly in school. Some participants shared how this did not come naturally. One of the dominant discourses about refugees in the UK is that they are ‘the other’, different to the British population and therefore somehow less entitled to help, support and resources (Shah, 2018). It is possible young refugees internalised such narratives, making them feel hesitant or reluctant to ask for help. The hesitation may also link to confidence, based on language proficiency or knowledge of what help is available. Asking for help was not a specific finding highlighted in the SLR, though it perhaps overlaps with ‘gaining independence skills’.

#### *5.2.12 Giving and giving back*

Internalised narratives about being ‘other’ and somehow less entitled may also be relevant here, particularly in relation to ‘giving back’. As referred to in the introduction section, inaccurate media portrayals of refugees as ‘illegal’ or ‘bogus’, particularly during ‘Brexit’

campaigning, fed into the discourse on refugees as false or an economic burden (Goodman & Narang, 2019).

Some participants spoke about wanting to ‘give back’ to those who helped them by succeeding, or because they felt grateful to the UK. Such motivations could be said to overlap with internalised constructions of how deserving they are of support, or what it means to be a ‘good immigrant’.

Many participants spoke of wanting to give back to their families, to see them happy and proud, which provided motivation to keep going and strive to succeed. The desire to please parents following endured losses has been found elsewhere in the literature, when exploring second generation perspectives of people with a refugee background (Bloch, 2018). This could relate to a need to offer restitution by doing well and fulfilling expectations and dreams of parents (Bloch, 2018). This implies a need to listen to refugee youths’ narrative constructions of not only their heritage, but what their heritage requires of them in the future and what resources they have to meeting these requirements (Vitus, 2021).

Aspiring to give and bring about change in the lives of others has been seen as a way of regaining some control and maintaining belief in oneself (Groark et al., 2011). Connecting with the section on ‘leaning on community like family’, giving and giving back may be explained by the motivation to support the collective. The present findings therefore add to the literature, in emphasising the importance of giving and giving back.

### 5.2.13 Recognising a promising future

Some participants spoke about the importance of seeing a tangible, promising future. There may be some links with the subcategory ‘taking shelter in hope’, where hope had a protective function whilst also pushing participants to keep going. The difference may be that here, future hope seemed to be conditional on the availability of certain resources. Participants described looking to the future with anticipation, only in instances when they were given an awareness of opportunities with the knowledge of how to get there and a sense that it is possible.

Panter-Brick (2015, as cited in Theron et al., 2015) found that mental health was strongly predicated on refugees’ hopes and opportunities for the future as well as the past. It was the future, not the past, that shaped many responses to adversity (Theron et al., 2015). Therefore, this finding builds on past research in highlighting the importance of future trajectories for young refugees in the context of available resources and access to role models who share their background and have been able to reach what they aspire to reach.

## 5.3 General reflections on the model

This GT model demonstrates the interplay between different systems surrounding young refugees in the UK, in line with the social ecological model of resilience (Ungar, 2012). Whilst previous literature has pointed towards individual factors and processes that support young refugee resilience, many of which have also featured in this model, this model is unique in that it brings these processes to show their inter-relationships, in a Brexit UK context. This addition therefore allows for the identification of which particular processes and mechanisms those supporting young refugees may wish to address first, given their potential domino effect in facilitating other important processes. The model also shows the

interdependency of certain processes, emphasising the importance of facilitating some in order to set others in motion. This helps us have a better understanding about which resources are needed for which mechanisms at which times.

This model also draws out some of the existing culturally meaningful resources and processes that young refugees have been using before arrival to the UK. Whilst some had been adapted in the new environment, many of these continued to be crucial to participants, and therefore are important to acknowledge and consider in the UK. There are many implications to draw from this.

## 5.4 Implications

Whilst the theoretical model produced from this research is situated within its context of time, place and co-constructions between all who were involved, the researcher proposes that it can offer a significant contribution towards improving the experiences of young refugees living in the UK. GT analyses can be transferred across substantive areas, if careful consideration is given to how and when this is done (Charmaz, 2014). The model has the potential to predict processes and conditions that would be helpful for young refugees arriving in the UK, if applied with consideration of contexts. From the resulting model, implications for improving the experience of young refugees living in the UK across clinical practice, schools and policymakers are outlined below.

### 5.4.1 Implications for clinical practice

Refugees and asylum seekers may be referred to mental health services for issues relating to trauma and loss or stressors in the UK, such as poverty, being denied access to work and uncertainty about the future (Douglas et al., 2018). Interestingly, participants in this study

made no specific mention of the role of mental health services in supporting them. However, mental health services, and in particular the profession of Clinical Psychology, may benefit from reflecting on the reasons for this. It is possible that participants were not perceived to require support from statutory mental health services by systems around them. It is also possible that they did not meet certain set thresholds for receiving support from services, or that these were not experienced as relevant or helpful to them. Regardless of the reasons, it would be worthwhile for mental health services to incorporate processes described by participants into current practice with young refugees and their families.

The findings emphasise the importance for a joined-up approach between services to support access to resources and processes that nurture resilience in a co-ordinated way. Such co-ordination may be preferred to individualised talking therapy, depending on each individual's goals. Services may need to be mindful about how support is offered, given participants' reports on this. Instead of signposting young refugees and discharging, it may be more appropriate to go through options of support in more detail and support the referral process if preferred. Young refugees may be more willing to accept opportunities presented to them, as found in the 'seeing the world anew' category.

Services may benefit from exploring existing culturally meaningful resources in initial assessments. This would help shift the narrative of 'vulnerable, traumatised people' to people who already possess resources and agency, whilst also attending to the availability of resources in their environments. Appreciative inquiry is a strengths-focused approach that helps tap into resources and explore dreams and aspirations (Fisher, 2009). This could be an ideal approach to adopt. Weine (2011) suggests that we could compare refugees with themselves, asking about what resilience processes supported them in the past whilst

considering their current social ecology, rather than comparing them to an idealized refugee family. This could help ascertain what types of existing resilience processes they can manage on their own, and which could benefit from intervention. This may help young refugees to feel seen.

Ideas around hope, fun, religion, meaning and community may or may not be relevant but may be worth exploring. In addition, exploring family resources and relationships is indicated to be important. Practitioners may wish to explore their family's hopes and wishes for them and consider involving them closely in the care plan if appropriate. Services may also wish to consider involving friends of young people as consultants in therapy, given the present findings highlighting the importance of friends in providing rest and relief, and the role of others becoming 'like family' in young refugees' lives. Bringing together the main subsystems of a young person in this way would allow an opportunity for a sharing of cultures and perspectives that would not have otherwise been easily possible (Haber, 1987).

#### 5.4.2 Implications for schools

The findings bring to light the variability of school support. Based on this model, a recommendation would be that schools invest time and relationships into identifying newcomer young refugees' strengths and needs, and consider support. In particular, offering support for improving their English language proficiency may improve confidence in class and open up opportunities for connection. Paying attention to encouraging young refugees and celebrating their achievements is something that could be impactful.

The findings also underscore the issue of bullying and racism in schools. Turner and Brown (2008) suggest that school staff need to be equipped with strategies to reduce prejudice. It

may help to explicitly state the school's stance towards racism. Creating a 'pro-refugee stance' at school as part of Personal and Social Education has been found to lead to students being more welcoming to refugees (Samara et al., 2020). It is important to educate young people about racism, including microaggressions, xenophobia, islamophobia and challenge unacceptable, pejorative language and stereotypes. It would be a good opportunity to encourage young refugees to share about their culture, knowledge, experience, and abilities if they wish to, as some participants found this important.

Pairing young refugees with peer mentors around school was found to be important for orientation and building relationships. It may be helpful to encourage this relationship to build outside of the school context too, to be shown around the local area and build connections.

Importantly, it would be helpful if schools could allocate time early on for explaining the school system in the UK, as well as giving direction on how they can improve in subjects. It would be useful to support young refugees more intensively to identify suitable career paths in line with their interests, skills and hopes. It would be ideal if young refugees could be connected with role models who share their background or experiences, particularly if they are in a field they aspire to work in.

Finally, offering opportunities for young refugees to contribute something to the school, or for other peers, possibly younger refugees joining the school could be hugely valuable.

#### 5.4.3 Implications for policymakers

Participants highlighted important issues which require wider structural changes determined by policymakers. Firstly, it is important that the UK has a just and humanitarian asylum system that fulfils the UK's commitments under the 1951 UN Convention. This may keep hope alive for refugees under extreme hardship in their country of origin, who are taking shelter in this hope.

The findings of this study build on the SLR findings regarding the importance of language proficiency, family togetherness and of being close in proximity to family or community members who feel like family. It is imperative that this is taken into account when considering asylum claims. The rule introduced in 2021 regarding the first "safe third country" (*The New Asylum Inadmissibility Rules – Right to Remain*, n.d.) does not currently give any consideration for this. This could be considered in relation to the current UK dispersal policy, where refugee families can find themselves isolated and cut off from communities that could act as a significant support for them.

As policies have the power to influence public attitudes through media and communication campaigns, one would urge for more inclusive integration policies to promote a more welcoming social environment for young refugees, who, as this study and previous research shows, would find it crucial to make new positive relationships (Hynie, 2018).

Findings in this study and the wider literature also highlighted the importance of agency, together with a strength-focused perspective regarding refugees. It has been argued that UK policy has reinforced the 'vulnerable refugee' narrative through developments such as the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme (SVPRP) which undermine such agency

and create a distinction between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ people (Smith & Waite, 2018).

At present, ESOL courses are only restricted to resettled Syrian refugees, excluding all other refugees including those who have followed the asylum route (Karyotis et al., 2020).

Investing in supporting refugees to improve their English proficiency would lead to marked improvements in their confidence and integration into education, work and social life according to participants in this study and the wider literature.

Finally, policies that account for refugee circumstances and reduce barriers to access are required to allow young refugees to recognise a promising future, as found in this study. These may include implementing contextual admissions into higher education, consideration of barriers around rising tuition fees and delayed eligibility for student support, restrictive immigration controls and costs of English language courses (Refugee Support Network, 2011).

## 5.5 Evaluation of the research

This research will be evaluated using Tracy’s Eight ‘Big Tent’ Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research (Tracy, 2010).

### 5.5.1 Strengths

**Table 11:** *Quality appraisal of current research*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>How this research meets criteria</b>
Worthy topic	<p>The topic explored is a worthy topic, particularly due to its relevance and timeliness to current events. Recent significant changes to asylum and resettlement policy by the government since the COVID-19 pandemic have been introduced (<i>Changes to Asylum &amp; Resettlement Policy and Practice in Response to Covid-19 - Refugee Council, 2021</i>), having a significant impact on refugee families in the UK and entering the UK. Media outlets are reporting frequently about further planned changes by the government, impacting public perception and response. It is therefore a critical time to review public perception of refugees and consider what nurtures resilience for them, according to them. It is significant in continuing to build on literature which has important clinical practice implications and exciting paradigm shifts. The findings are also interesting as they present a new model that brings together processes in a unique way to further our understanding of refugee resilience, in a way that has not been done yet in the UK, to the researcher's knowledge. Participants who took part were predominantly from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) nations, a group which has been reported to have had extremely negative portrayals in the media and a surge in hate crimes in recent years (Glass &amp; Gesing, 2021), making research with this group even more pertinent.</p>

	Including participants with other preferred languages to English was an important strength of this study for including a variety of perspectives and those who have traditionally been excluded from research (Vara & Patel, 2012).
Rich rigour	The study has shown rich rigour through its constant comparison-making during the analysis to ensure it is robust and indeed grounded in the data. It employed theoretical sampling and the concept of saturation of the constructed categories for thoroughness, and the supervisory team were closely involved to check for quality and coherence.
Sincerity	Sincerity has been demonstrated through the use of transparency regarding the researcher's own position, privileges and perspectives together with the epistemological position of this research. The researcher made use of bracketing interviews and journaling alongside memo-writing to consider the ways this might be influencing the process. Considerations regarding power were given space and were discussed from the earliest stages. Furthermore, challenges during the research, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, were made transparent.
Credibility	In relation to credibility, member-checking took place with seven participants. All participants who took part in the earlier stages of the research were invited to member-checking. Participants shared invaluable perspectives at this point, which led to important changes in the model as can be seen in Appendix N4. This was aimed to increase relevance for participants and allow further co-construction. It was a strength that the researcher could understand and speak Arabic, which allowed the researcher to stay close to participants' language and meanings.

Resonance	Throughout the process, findings were shared with supervisors to check for resonance. Theoretical sampling allowed for revisiting interviews from a ‘new standpoint’ and revising the model accordingly (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020).
Significant contribution	The GT model offers significant contribution theoretically and heuristically, given the current interest in the conceptualisation regarding resilience for refugee populations. Methodologically, it takes a more unique approach to dominant literature which has focused predominantly on pathology and reduction of symptoms. Furthermore, it has visually represented a complex dynamic process that interacts with time and context, filling a gap that was acknowledged in the literature (Tol et al., 2013; Pieloch et al., 2016). Through its approach, it aimed to challenge dominant Western perspectives and understandings about refugees and resilience, and aimed to privilege their voices throughout the process, therefore making a contribution morally. Practically, the findings have implications that can apply to various social agents involved in systems surrounding young refugees.
Ethical	Ethics were considered in relation to university approval and organisations’ protocols. Feedback on ethical issues was sought from organisations, including from those with extensive cultural knowledge and insights. Additional ethical consideration were made, particularly in relation to power, cultural sensitivity and language.
Meaningful coherence	The research has overlaps with, and links closely to SLR findings and the wider literature, whilst also building on this, allowing for new understandings of the topic. The methodology allowed for an exploration of processes and relationships between processes, which brought novel findings to the UK context.

### 5.5.2 Limitations and future research

This research has important limitations to acknowledge. Challenges of recruitment during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the diversity of the sample, which is relevant in a GT study like this one. For example, the majority of participants were in higher education or aiming for higher education. Interviewing participants who took alternative routes would have been interesting to compare findings.

Similarly, it was interesting to note that unaccompanied minors did not take part. This may reflect the resettlement schemes in areas recruited from. It may also reflect a strategy by organisations to approach parents. Learning from this, it would be useful to target research advertisement towards young refugees, and particularly seek out unaccompanied refugee minors, to compare their perspectives.

Theoretical sampling allowed for diversity in relation to MENA nations, religion and source of recruitment, but difficulty recruiting meant that the model could not be tested with refugees whose country of origin was outside of MENA. This makes the model perhaps more relevant within its current context for refugees from MENA nations and is in line with Ungar's recommendations of exploring specific ethnic groups' distinct resilience processes (Ungar, 2008). Future research could test this model with refugees from other parts of the world, as this would widen our understanding about these processes.

Recruiting most participants from community organisations may have biased the research towards those who already received some support. Future research could recruit using alternative routes, such as postal advertisement or community spaces.

Finally, longitudinal studies could be valuable as they may shed light on resilience processes over time, and what changes, or becomes more or less important as young refugees spend longer in the UK. This might help us understand better which resources and mechanisms are best suited to which stages for young refugees.

## 5.6 Final reflections

Throughout this process, I have had a complex relationship with the term ‘resilience’. I have been mindful to strive not to ‘romanticise’ resilience, or discount the need for structural forces and oppressive systems to change, that lead to people needing to flee their homes. I am aware of how the term has been used to cause harm by shifting the focus onto individuals and placing responsibility for change within them rather than within wider structures. I was mindful of the implications of acknowledging processes that precede arrival in the UK, in case that is misconstrued to suggest that young refugees require less support than we think. On the other hand, I was also mindful of the unhelpful narratives around ‘saving vulnerable people’ and rhetoric of the ‘white saviour’, suggesting that it is because of ‘us’, that refugees living in the UK are resilient. This was a balance and ethical responsibility I was grappling with throughout and it reflects the number of harmful narratives in society that have a real and powerful impact on refugees arriving in the UK.

I have also wondered who holds responsibility towards young refugees in relation to their potential to thrive? In wording the categories, this became pertinent to clarify.

I have experienced the period of conducting and writing this research to be an extremely challenging time. COVID-19 drastically changed our lives and interactions, magnifying structural inequalities. Racism, xenophobia, violence and oppression repeatedly resurfaced in

events around the world. Witnessing families being forcibly displaced in Palestine through the media immediately connected me to the beginnings of the journeys participants had shared with me. I held both great sorrow at the pain being endured, and a small but present hope for the processes discussed in this research to be alive to support people to go on. In this way, I seem to have borrowed some hope from my participants, whilst in a privileged position of witnessing the situation from safety. On a personal level, I experienced three bereavements of very important people in my life during this time. Even in grief, this research and its demand of my attention nudged me towards noticing and participating in processes and relationships that nurture resilience around and for me, too, which I am so grateful for.

## 5.7 Conclusion

This study has contributed to our understanding about refugee resilience in presenting a complex, dynamic interaction of processes and mechanisms that help to explain how, why and when resources and social agents support young refugees to keep going. It has also shown how resilience is more than access to resources, but a result of dynamic relational and interdependent interactions that feedback to individuals' ideas about their identities and belonging. The findings acknowledge culturally meaningful resources that young refugees and their families found valuable before arrival to the UK, whilst highlighting which processes have helped them most in the UK. The findings point towards important practical implications for anyone working with young refugees as well as policymakers, who have such a powerful influence on the way refugees are perceived and consequently interacted with.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Outline of process of thematic synthesis of SLR papers

## What does the literature say about what promotes young refugee resilience?

### Key concepts

Learning to navigate school system (via peers)

Ecosystem of supports – importance of system-wide support mechanism

Family promoting educational achievement and career objectives

Family maintaining connection with national/ethnic heritage

Supportive friends – orienting, friends interested in learning about them and their background

School and community – scaffolding language, tutoring and mentoring, extra-curricular activities, co-ordination between systems, promoting trauma informed care, specialised care

Supportive peer groups – adjustment to new schools, overcome language barriers and microaggressions and create sense of belonging

Seizing opportunities of new society

Participating in communities

Government investment

Kindness, helpfulness and friendliness creating sense of safety

Perceived support

Social support and encouragement

Friendships with youth who experienced similar difficulties

School as supportive carer

Adapting to host country – fit in, learn rules

Education as way to adapt to new society, not wasting opportunities, comparison with others who haven't been able to reach destination

Close meaningful social relationships

Acting autonomously – left to own devices, persistence, personal control, own pep talks

Performing at school – 'key to better future' and distraction, power and control, social contacts

Participating in new society – learning Dutch quickly. Religion providing support and guidance and distraction

Available support systems and transitions faced over time

Interplay of individual, social and contextual factors

Active choices to adapt faith to new context

Faith providing continuity, meaning, comfort and increased sense of control

Self in relationship

Being at one with oneself

Hope from building on past accomplishments

Belief that can actively shape lives

Religion coping strategy and source of pride

Seeking out people from countries of origin  
 Receptive to new people and experiences

Negotiating new way of life – comparisons and difference

Education as a ‘way out’ to better life

Trying to gain control

Needing to change status

Being successful and respected – intense determination to succeed

Avoidance of distressing thoughts and feelings

Utilising support networks: role of friends. Being with as way of avoiding difficult thoughts and feelings and advise on how to fit in

Utilizing support networks; professionals – guidance and reassurance

Improved knowledge of legal/health/social welfare system

Opportunity to develop meaningful role in community

Social support – supportive and sympathetic. Comparison: With people who had shared experiences, with others less well off

Someone to confide in who could offer comfort

Activity – distraction – self esteem and self-efficacy

Religion – guide, meets emotional needs, social support

## Descriptive themes

1. Adjustment to new country

2. Participation to fit in

3. Multi-levels of support

4. Success in education and career; education as a ‘way out’ to a better life

5. Autonomy and control

6. Religion and faith

7. Activity and distraction

8. Close and comforting relationships

## Analytic themes:

- 1) Multiple levels of support required
- 2) Adjustment to new country
- 3) Supportive friendships

**4) Education as the key****Subtheme: autonomy and control**

(for adapting and integration, for agency, for power, control – link with independence (and acting autonomously), friendships)

**5) Religion**

## Appendix B: Research journal extracts

The following reflective journal entry relates to earlier stages of participant recruitment:

26/06/20

### **Frustration**

I'm finding myself feeling frustrated at the obstacles I'm hitting with recruitment of participants. Some of them are out of everyone's control...COVID-19 has meant that many organisation centres that support refugees have had to close or reprioritise to manage urgent situations that have arisen out of the pandemic. That's completely understandable.

I've emailed 16 organisations to date. I have received responses from seven, three of which said that they get these sorts of requests from academics and the media all the time and that they don't want to be involved as they feel it would overwhelm the young people– or that the young people won't want it.

This raises some discomfort for me. I guess I struggle with being categorised as 'academics and media' because this ignores the dual role of clinical psychologists as practitioners as well as researchers. I count it a privilege to hear someone's story and I'm doing this research because I'm passionate about this...I recognise, though, that some people may sadly 'use' these communities and use their power and privilege to gain something from their pain, and that makes me sad.

I can see the kindness behind the 'protectiveness' of some people in leadership positions in organisations in not wanting to cause harm, and their responses resulting from previous negative experiences. It made me wonder if young refugees are at times 'fragilised' by society, seen only through the lens of vulnerability, as people who need protection and cannot make decisions for themselves in this country in case they get hurt. I hope that they are given the opportunity, support and autonomy to decide for themselves what is right for them...

I've also found myself wanting to provide credibility and reassurance for my interest in the topic – that I'm an immigrant, that I was uprooted from family and friends and entered a different culture as a child... my name gives little away about my ethnicity, and I wonder if responses would have been different from potential participants, if my name was different...

This journal entry relates to the later stages of participant recruitment:

31/08/20

### **Doors are finally opening!**

Finally, I have confirmed participants!! One organisation has had a number of volunteers come forward so far which is such a fantastic, encouraging start.

I'm learning how to frame my research to organisations in a way that helpfully emphasises potential benefits of taking part for the young refugees and also stresses that it is entirely optional.

I've also found myself navigating being both a researcher and an Arabic-speaking individual to participants. There's something about sharing a language that brings a certain familiarity, a shared humour and culture quite different to here. It suddenly bridges a gap between us...and pushes me slightly away from a removed researcher role, because the relationship somehow becomes less formal. It is interesting to question my own assumptions about how formal and distanced a researcher should be...

Will this impact on the research? Will this be different with non-arabic speaking participants? I need to be mindful that I do not slip into making assumptions of 'knowing' just because of the sense of familiarity this may create, but maintain my curiosity as much as possible. I have noticed that when I speak my imperfect Arabic, participants have more 'language power', and when I speak English, I perhaps have more 'language power'. It is perhaps a way to rebalance some aspects of power, then.

This reflective journal entry was written following a participant interview:

05/10/20

### **Thoughts after an interview**

For this participant, acceptance (for who she is) was so important – and she seemed to realise throughout the course of this interview that she actually doesn't want an English accent...that she is proud to be who she is. She seemed to be grappling with wanting not to be treated differently and wanting to embrace her difference – which I could connect to.

Did the interview verge on therapeutic at times? Did this happen because she got tearful talking about something in particular? She joked at the end 'that was really good, I should go to therapy more!'. This made me wonder if I've done something 'wrong' for it to be experienced like therapy rather than research, even if jokingly said, or whether research can actually also be experienced as therapeutic, or bring about therapeutic conversations?

I also felt unsure about my researcher position when the participant surprised me by asking my question back to me, asking what the one thing is that I would choose that would improve my life in the UK. That either suggests to me that she saw me as an insider, or was just curious, or was perhaps looking for an 'ideal' or right answer. I was caught in a dilemma; I didn't want to centre myself but I also didn't want to shut down an invitation to share something of myself, as initiated by the participant. I was nervous about answering, but my answer seemed to resonate with the participant and therefore opened a door to a new conversation about something important to her, that we may not have otherwise touched on. She also expressed some embarrassment that she had not said this in her answer, which I felt awful about. I guess this process has shown me the various ways that data is co-constructed through our interactions.



HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

**ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION**

TO Sylvia Michael  
CC Dr Pieter Nel  
FROM Dr Simon Trainis, Health, Science, Engineering & Technology ECDA Chair  
DATE 18/06/2020

---

Protocol number: LMS/PGT/UH/04186

Title of study: Exploring the processes that nurture the resilience of young refugees living in the UK

Your application for ethics approval has been accepted and approved with the following conditions by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

**no additional workers named**

**General conditions of approval:**

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

**Permissions:** Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

**External communications:** Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

**Invasive procedures:** If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

**Submission:** Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

**Validity:**

This approval is valid:

From: 01/07/2020

To: 30/09/2020

**Please note:**

## Appendix D: Ethics approval notification 2



HEALTH, SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY ECDA

## ETHICS APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

TO Sylvia Michaeel  
 CC Dr Pieter Nel  
 FROM Dr Rosemary Godbold, Health, Science, Engineering and Technology ECDA  
 Vice Chairman  
 DATE 25/08/20

---

Protocol number: aLMS/PGT/UH/04186(1)

Title of study: Exploring the processes that nurture the resilience of young refugees living in the UK

Your application to modify and extend the existing protocol as detailed below has been accepted and approved by the ECDA for your School and includes work undertaken for this study by the named additional workers below:

**no additional workers named**

**Modification:** change the end date

### General conditions of approval:

Ethics approval has been granted subject to the standard conditions below:

**Original protocol:** Any conditions relating to the original protocol approval remain and must be complied with.

**Permissions:** Any necessary permissions for the use of premises/location and accessing participants for your study must be obtained in writing prior to any data collection commencing. Failure to obtain adequate permissions may be considered a breach of this protocol.

**External communications:** Ensure you quote the UH protocol number and the name of the approving Committee on all paperwork, including recruitment advertisements/online requests, for this study.

**Invasive procedures:** If your research involves invasive procedures you are required to complete and submit an EC7 Protocol Monitoring Form, and copies of your completed consent paperwork to this ECDA once your study is complete.

**Submission:** Students must include this Approval Notification with their submission.

**Validity:**

This approval is valid:

From: 25/08/2020

To: 30/09/2021

**Please note:**

**Failure to comply with the conditions of approval will be considered a breach of protocol and may result in disciplinary action which could include academic penalties.**

Additional documentation requested as a condition of this approval protocol may be submitted via your supervisor to the Ethics Clerks as it becomes available. All documentation relating to this study, including the information/documents noted in the conditions above, must be available for your supervisor at the time of submitting your work so that they are able to confirm that you have complied with this protocol.

**Should you amend any aspect of your research or wish to apply for an extension to your study you will need your supervisor's approval (if you are a student) and must complete and submit a further EC2 request.**

Approval applies specifically to the research study/methodology and timings as detailed in your Form EC1A or as detailed in the EC2 request. In cases where the amendments to the original study are deemed to be substantial, a new Form EC1A may need to be completed prior to the study being undertaken.

**Failure to report adverse circumstance/s may be considered misconduct.**

Should adverse circumstances arise during this study such as physical reaction/harm, mental/emotional harm, intrusion of privacy or breach of confidentiality this must be reported to the approving Committee immediately.

## Appendix E: Research poster



# ARE YOU A REFUGEE AGED 14-24?

**Did you arrive in the UK between  
July 2016 and January 2020?**

**Do you want to tell your story?**

We are inviting you to share with us **what helps you to  
keep going** during difficult times.

We are doing this research to help services understand  
how young refugees can be supported in the most helpful  
ways to them in the UK.

The conversation is CONFIDENTIAL and completely separate from Home Office procedures

**If you are interested and want more information, please contact  
Sylvia at: [sm18aeb@herts.ac.uk](mailto:sm18aeb@herts.ac.uk) / 07955 102192**

*We would love to hear from you*

**University of Hertfordshire UH** Ethics Committee

This study has received ethics approval from the University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee. Protocol number: aLMS/PGT/UH/04186(1)

## Information sheet

### **Title of Research Study:** *Exploring the processes that nurture resilience of young refugees living in the UK*

**You have been invited to take part in a piece of research being carried out by Sylvia Michaelael (trainee clinical psychologist).**

Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important that you understand what the research is about and what you would be asked to do if you choose to take part.

Please take some time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you like. Please ask me anything at all that is not clear or for any more information you would like to help you make your decision. Please take your time to decide whether or not you wish to be involved

*This study has received ethics approval from the University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee. Protocol number: aLMS/PGT/UH/04186(1).*

### **So what is this study about?**

This study is about trying to understand what helps young refugees living in the UK to keep going and thrive. If we can understand what sort of things help the most, we can help services understand how they can support young refugees in the most helpful ways here in the UK.

### **What would happen if I agreed to take part?**

If you are willing to take part in the research, we would set up a video call for about one hour, although you can choose to pause stop the call at any point if you wish.

I would be asking you about what sort of things helped you or gave you strength to carry on when you were going through difficult life experiences, and how you have been coping since you came to the UK. You do not have to talk about any of the difficult experiences you have been through and you do not have to share anything that you do not feel comfortable sharing.

If you prefer to talk to me in a language other than English, we can arrange to have an interpreter present with us who will translate everything I say into your language and everything you say into English.

After the interview, to say thank-you for your time and contribution, you will receive a £10 voucher via email.

### **Who can take part in this study?**

Anyone who has moved to the UK between **July 2016 and January 2020** who is between age **14 and 24**.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it is totally up to you whether or not you choose to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part you can keep this information sheet and you will be asked to sign a consent form. Agreeing to join the study does not mean that you have to complete it. You are free to stop at any stage without giving a reason.

### **Can I take part in a different way if I don't want to talk about my experiences?**

Yes absolutely! you can take part by giving your opinions on the way we do this study – that would be very helpful to us too!

### **Will my information be kept safe?**

Our conversation will be audio-recorded and the recording will be typed up word-for-word afterwards. The recording will then be deleted and typed words will be password-protected. When I type our conversation, I will also change any personal information about you so that the information is not identifiable (such as names, specific places and ages).

### **What will happen to the results of the study?**

When the research is complete I will write up the results as an academic thesis at university. I will also write an article for publication in an academic journal. If you are interested in the results of the study, you can ask for a summary to be sent to you.

### **Who can I contact if I have any questions?**

If you would like further information or would like to discuss any details personally, please get in touch with me or my main research supervisor, in writing, by phone or by email:

Principal researcher  
Sylvia Michael  
Trainee Clinical Psychologist  
Tel: 07955 102192  
Email: [sm18aeb@herts.ac.uk](mailto:sm18aeb@herts.ac.uk)

**Although we hope it is not the case, if you have any complaints or concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please write to the University's Secretary and Registrar at the following address:**

Secretary and Registrar, University of Hertfordshire  
College Lane  
Hatfield  
Herts  
AL10 9AB

**Thank you very much for reading this information and giving consideration to taking part in this study. This information sheet is for you to keep.**

## Appendix G: Participant consent forms

### Consent Form for ages 16+ (or minors assessed as Gillick competent)

Please complete this form once you have read the information sheet and/or listened to an explanation about this research.

**Title:** “Exploring the processes that nurture the resilience of young refugees living in the UK”

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. If you have any questions regarding taking part in this research or arising from the information sheet please ask, before signing this form. You will also be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I, the undersigned [*please give your name here, in BLOCK CAPITALS*]

.....  
of [*please give contact details here, sufficient to enable the investigator to get in touch with you, such as a postal or email address*]

.....  
hereby freely agree to take part in the study entitled [*insert name of study here*]

Please tick the box if you agree with each sentence:

- I have read and understood the information sheet given to me in this study
- I confirm I have been given a copy of the information sheet to keep
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study and discuss details of the study with the researcher
- I understand that all the information given in this study will remain confidential and only the researcher involved will have access to identifying data.
- I understand that I can choose to decline answering any of the questions during the session
- I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage or having to give a reason.
- I understand that my taking part will not affect the support I receive from any services or my claim for asylum or legal status
- I understand that my interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed

- I agree that the results will be written up for thesis and publication but that my personal information will be removed from it (eg names, places and ages)
- Contact details have been given to me if I wish to ask any more questions about the research

Signature of participant.....Date.....

Signature of (principal) investigator.....Date.....

Name of (principal) investigator *[in BLOCK CAPITALS please]*

.....

## Consent Form for participants aged 14-16

Please complete this form once you have read the information sheet and/or listened to an explanation about this research.

**Title:** “Exploring the processes that nurture the resilience of young refugees living in the UK”

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. If you have any questions regarding taking part in this research or arising from the information sheet please ask, before signing this form. You will also be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I, the undersigned *[please give your name here, in BLOCK CAPITALS]*

.....  
of *[please give contact details here, sufficient to enable the investigator to get in touch with you, such as a postal or email address]*

.....  
hereby freely give approval for *[please give name of participant here, in BLOCK CAPITALS]*

.....  
to take part in the study entitled *[insert name of study here]*

.....  
(UH Protocol number .....) )

Please tick the box if you agree with each sentence:

- I have read and understood the information sheet given to me in this study
- I confirm I have been given a copy of the information sheet to keep
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study and discuss details of the study with the researcher
- I understand that all the information given in this study will remain confidential and only the researcher involved will have access to identifying data.
- I understand that he/she can choose to decline answering any of the questions during the session
- I understand that he/she may withdraw from the study, and that I may withdraw my permission for him/her to continue to be involved in the study, at any time without disadvantage to him/her or to myself, or having to give a reason.

- I understand that my taking part will not affect the support we receive from any services or our claim for asylum or legal status
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed
- I agree that the results will be written up for thesis and publication but that his/her personal information will be removed from it (eg names, places and ages)
- Contact details have been given to me if I wish to ask any more questions about the research
- I declare that I am an appropriate person to give consent on his/her behalf, and that I am aware of my responsibility for protecting his/her interests

Signature of person giving consent .....Date.....

Relationship to participant .....

Signature of (principal)  
investigator.....Date.....

Name of (principal) investigator [*in BLOCK CAPITALS please*]

.....

**هل انت لاجئ**  
**السن من 14-24**



**هل وصلت للملكه المتحده في الفتره من**  
**يوليو 2016 حتي يناير 2020**

**هل تريد ان نخبرنا بقصتك**

نحن ندعوك ان تشاركنا فيما يمكن ان نساعد به ليتمكنك  
من تجاوز تلك الاوقات  
الصعبه

نحن نقوم بهذا البحث لنساعد من يقدم الخدمات ان يتفهم كيف نستطيع  
ان نساعد  
اللاجئين الصغار بافضل الوسائل للمساعده في  
الحياه في المملكه المتحده

المناقشات تدور في سريه ولا علاقه لها اطلاقا باداره الهجره  
لو كنت مهتما او اردت المزيد من المعلومات يمكنكم الاتصال ب

**sm18aeb@herts.ac.uk / 07955 102192**  
**نحن نرحب بالتواصل معكم**

**University of Hertfordshire UH** Ethics Committee  
البحث تم اعتماده من  
جهاز اداب المهنة في الجامعة  
University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering and  
Technology Ethics Committee. Protocol number:  
aLMS/PG1/UH/04186(1)

### عنوان البحث

استكشاف طرق تنشئه المرونه والتكيف في صغار اللاجنين المقيمين في المملكه المتحده  
انت مدعو للمشاركة في البحث المقدم عن طريق سيلفيا ميخائيل (اخصائي نفسي تحت التدريب)  
قبل المشاركة من المهم ان تتفهم الهدف من البحث قبل ان تقر  
برجاء اعطاء بعض الوقت لقراءه المعلومات بعنايه ويمكنك مشاركه الاخرين ان رغبت  
يمكنكم ايضا الاستفسار مني في حاله الرغبه في مزيد من التوضيح او اي شئ يساعدك في اتخاذ قرارك  
رجاء القراءه بعنايه ومنح الوقت الكافي لتقرر المشاركة

البحث معتمد من جهه اداب المهنة في

University of Hertfordshire Health, Science, Engineering and Technology Ethics Committee.  
Protocol number: aLMS/PGT/UH/04186(1)

### ما هو الغرض من البحث؟

الغرض منه محاوله تفهم ما قد يساعد صغار اللاجنين المقيمين في المملكه المتحده ان ينموا وينجحوا  
ان استطعنا ان نتفهم ما هو المطلوب سوف نساعد مقدمي الخدمات المختلفه ان يقدموا الدعم المناسب بافضل الطرق في  
المملكه المتحده

### ما سوف يحدث لو وافقت علي المشاركة؟

في حاله الموافقه علي المشاركة سوف نقوم بترتيب مقابله عن طريق الفيديو لمدته حوالي ساعه و يمكن ايقاف المكالمه في  
اي وقت حسب الرغبه  
سوف اقوم بالسؤال عن ما هو افضل شئ كان يساعدك و يعطيك القوه و الدافع لاجتياز اختبارات الحياه الصعبه و كيفيه  
التعامل معها من ساعه الوصول للملكه المتحده  
ليس من المطلوب منك ان تشارك كل الاختبارات الصعبه في حاله عدم الارتياح  
في حاله ان كنت تود التحدث بغير اللغه الانجليزيه نحن نستطيع ترتيب حضور مترجم للمساعده في الترحمه  
بعد المقابله وكاسلوب لتقديم الشكر للمشاركه واستخدام وقتك سوف نرسل مبلغ عشره جنيهات عن طريق البريد  
الالكتروني

### من له حق المشاركة؟

اي شخص يبلغ من العمر 14 الي 24 سنه ووصل للمملكه المتحده من يوليو 2016 حتي نناير  
2020

### هل لابد ان اشارك؟

لا انه تماما يرجع اليك في حاله ان قررت المشاركة سوف تحتفظ بورقه المعلومات وتوقع علي اقرار الموافقه ويجدر ان  
تشير انه يمكنك التوقف في اي مرحله دون ابداء اي اسباب

### هل يمكن ان اشارك بطريقه مختلفه ان كنت لا اريد التحدث عن تجربتي الشخصيه؟

بالطبع نعم من الممكن المشاركة بابداء رايبك في الطريقه التي تقوم بها في تلك الدراسه وسوف يكون نافعا جدا لنا

### هل سوف يتم الاحتفاظ بالمعلومات بصوره امنه؟

المحادثات سوف تكون مسجله وسوف يتم تفرغها كلمه بكلمه حرفيا ثم سوف تمحي والتفريغ المكتوب سوف يحفظ  
بخاصيه كلمه المرور

### ما سوف يحدث لنتائج الدراسه؟

عند الانتهاء منها سوف اقوم بتقديم النتائج الي اطروحه اكاديميه في الجامعه وايضا سوف اقوم بتقديم النتائج للنشر في  
احدي المجلات العلميه و من الممكن ايضا ارسال ملخص لك في حاله ابداء الرغبه

ان كان يوجد بعض الاسئله من سوف يقوم بالاجابه عنها؟

ان اردت المزيد من المعلومات او تود الاستفسار عن اي شئ يمكن الاتصال بي شخصيا او المشرفين علي الدراسه عن طريق الاتصال التليفوني او البريد الالكتروني

Principal researcher

Sylvia Michael

Trainee Clinical Psychologist

Tel: 07955 102192

Email: [sm18aeb@herts.ac.uk](mailto:sm18aeb@herts.ac.uk)

ومع تمنياتنا الابدث فانه ان كان هناك اي شكاوي بخصوص الاتصالات او طريقه التعامل خلال الدراسه يمكنكم الاتصال بسكرتيره الجامعه علي العنوان التالي

Secretary and Registrar, University of Hertfordshire

College Lane

Hatfield

Herts

AL10 9AB

شكرا جزيلاً لقراءه المعلومات و الاهتمام بالمشاركه في الدراسه يمكنكم الاحتفاظ بورقه المعلومات

## Appendix I: Interpreter confidentiality agreement template

**Interpreter Confidentiality Agreement**

**Title of Project:** *Exploring Processes that Nurture Resilience for Young Refugees Living in the UK*

**Name of principal researcher:** Sylvia Michael

**Supervisors:** Dr Pieter Nel, Dr Mohamed Altawil

**Statement/Declaration by interpreter**

I ..... declare that:

I am proficient in the participant's native language and have agreed to be the interpreter. I have assisted the principal researcher in explaining the information about the proposed research in the participant's native language. The participant was encouraged to ask questions. I am satisfied that the participant has adequately understood the information provided.

To the best of my ability, I will execute a complete and accurate interpretation, not omitting or changing anything discussed in the course of the interview. I agree to respect the confidentiality of any conversation I interpret. I will not in any way divulge the contents of these sessions to any other individual or organisation.

I understand that the sessions will be audio recorded and these recordings will be kept securely until the research is completed.

Interpreter's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interpreter: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## DEBRIEFING INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you very much again for taking part and for making this research possible.

This research aimed to explore which things come together to help encourage resilience of young refugees living in the UK.

The research so far on young refugees has focused mostly on how they can sometimes be affected badly by the experiences they have been through, but there has been less research on the strengths, skills and abilities they bring with them into a country.

Past research has also tried to find out why some young refugees don't usually use mental health services for support but has not found out what young refugees think about what usually helps *them* when they face difficult times in life. This is why I focused on this topic. The hope is that we can learn from this research, so that services can support in the most helpful ways to young refugees.

There is always support available to you, just in case you do ever need it. These include:

1. Your GP
2. Samaritans – *a helpline open 24 hours a day. It is answered by trained volunteers ready to listen.*  
**phone number:** 116 123 (free)

## Appendix K: Interview schedule

These questions are likely to evolve and change as the interview process begins, due to the nature of the Grounded Theory methodology. However, these may be possible questions that I may wish to ask participants in the initial stages of the research:

### Introduction

'My name is Sylvia, I am in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of training as a clinical psychologist. This means that I speak with people who are going through difficult times in order to together make sense of what has been affecting them, and together work out what can be done.

I am an immigrant from Egypt and I also came to this country at a young age. I'm interested in learning about the experiences of young refugees like yourself in the UK and what helps refugees to do well, particularly when life is difficult. This might help us to better understand how refugees can be supported in the most helpful ways to them, here in the UK. So far, have you got any questions for me?'

*Researcher to check participant understands what will happen next, has been sent an information sheet and understands the terms of confidentiality:*

'Did you have a chance to look at the information sheet or would you like us to go through it together now?' act according to response.

*Researcher to check consent:*

'Before we start, let's just remind ourselves of what the consent form says' read out and check agreement to proceed.

*Researcher to check use of an interpreter:*

'You said that you didn't want an interpreter here to translate, is this still the case?' (If not, reschedule interview)

*Or if interpreter is present*

'you asked to have an interpreter with us, can I check that this is still what you would like?' (explain agreed process of translating so that young person is familiar with what is about to happen)

'Have you got any questions for me before we start? Please remember that we can pause or stop altogether at any time you like.'

## **PRESS RECORD**

### Ice-breaker questions

- Can you tell me about something you enjoy doing, either here, or before you came to this country?
- Which country did you come from and when did you arrive?
- What do you want to be/do when you grow up?

### Interview questions

1. Do you want to tell me the story about how you came to be in this country?

Please only share whatever feels ok to share right now.

2. When you were in (country of origin), what did and your family do to manage/cope with the difficult times?  
*Possible prompts*
  - a) Were there things you did together?
  - b) Were there things you did by yourself?
  - c) What kind of things helped you the most when life was hard?
  - d) What about that was helpful?
  - e) What made you keep going?
  - f) What always made you feel a bit better?
  - g) Did anything else make life any easier or more tolerable?
  - h) Can you tell me about a time when you were in a difficult situation, but you managed?
  - i) What allowed that to happen / what improved the situation?
  - j) How else did you manage when things were difficult or upsetting?
  
3. What about here in the UK, have you found any similar ways of managing?  
*Possible prompts*
  - a) What sort of things help you when you feel sad or lonely?
  - b) Who helps?
  - c) Do you have any skills that you brought with you that help you manage?
  - d) What would your friends or family back in (country of origin) advise you to do?
  - e) What has your culture taught you about dealing with difficulties?
  - f) Is that similar or different to British culture do you think?
  - g) Have you found any new things in the UK that are helping you to keep going?
  
4. Based on your view and experience, what things strengthen you to overcome challenges of being a refugee in the UK?  
*Possible prompts*
  - a) Can you tell me about a time when you or your family overcame a challenge as refugees in the UK?
  
5. What do you think are the most important things that need to happen in the UK for young refugees to feel supported enough to follow their dreams here?  
*Possible prompt*
  - a) If you had freedom to choose *anything at all* that would help improve your life here in the UK, what would that be?

### **At end of interview**

Thank participant, check if they have anything else they wanted to say or any questions and offer the voucher. Remind them of contact details should they wish to ask questions or withdraw consent (within 2 weeks) and ask if they want to receive a summary of the results when the project is complete.

- Check if ok
- Voucher
- Can check analysis in about a month?

## Appendix L: Example of memo-ing

1/3/21

**Memo: Allowing HOPE to drive and sustain**

Hope driving alleviates unfathomable burdens. It makes living now possible, tolerable, bearable. It allows one to keep going, because better is coming. It allows one not to **need** to know the exact next step, because it knows **anything** has to be better than this. It opens you up.

Hope therefore drives. It doesn't catapult, carelessly, it drives – steadily, but surely, in the direction of relief. It doesn't demand change now; it waits actively and patiently, waiting for the moment at which it is no longer acceptable to stay, and it's time to follow hope. At this point, allowing hope to drive means trusting it fully – not holding back; pouring money and effort into hope. At this point it is necessary and life-giving to grasp onto hope's lead.

It is sometimes necessarily visible and present, in conversations between families. A point of agreement and reassurance. But sometimes, holding onto it isn't even conscious – it takes you by surprise and shows you your strength. Sometimes it's the only option.

It has a funny relationship with time, it shortens unending suffering. It carries you into the future to rest a while. It helps you put up with injustice and hardship. It is protecting, shielding from the effects of now. But it is also pulling into the future, when a line has been crossed. It is giving confidence and assurance.

What are people doing? They are trusting, and taking shelter in. They're clinging onto it, and not yielding or surrendering, that feels too passive. More like making room for hope.

Seeking out rest

Finding rest in hope

**Taking shelter in hope**

Taking a chance on hope

Riding on hope

Being transported together by hope

Being steered by hope

Hope psychologically traversing

Holding hope allows you to leave before you've left.

Link with category: creating spaces free from hardship.

## Appendix M: Analysis Audit Trail

## Appendix M1: Line by line coding extract

<p>832 <b>Interviewer:</b> Thank you so much for sharing that. That  833 was really beautiful, thank you. Ok. Final questions, just a  834 couple left. I wanted to ask - what do you think are the  835 most important things that need to happen in the UK for  836 young refugees to feel supported enough to follow their  837 dreams here?  838 <b>Participant:</b> Erm...I feel like looking back at my journey  839 in school and in college, I feel like young refugees need to  840 get a lot of help and guidance on all different levels –  841 because I feel like young refugees need to, like in a way,  842 cos like imagine you're coming at the age of 16, I feel  843 like, socially and academically you need to catch up with  844 everything that you've missed since <del>er</del> starting <del>uni</del> with  845 like your friends for you to be able to like carry on like a  846 normal person I feel. And even then you won't be able to  847 carry on like a normal person but it will be like better. So I  848 feel like they need to get a lot of – a lot more, erm, help  849 and support and guidance, whether it's moral, whether it's  850 financial, whether it's erm...just kind of verbal guidance  851 onto what they need to do, erm...for the next step for  852 what they want to achieve, for what they want to do. They  853 need to get a lot more, like guidance, like for myself, I had  854 – I had a lot of guidance don't get me wrong, but a lot of  855 times I felt like I needed help with something and I had to  856 do something on my own. And at times it was very hard  857 because everything was like strange and everything was  858 just like, <del>er</del>, new to me in a way  859 <b>Interviewer:</b> Yeah  860 <b>Participant:</b> And I feel like, I've put in a lot of effort and  861 time into like discovering and exploring the the...the way  862 of life in the UK and the country and like the culture for</p>		<p>Getting help and guidance on all different levels</p> <p>Catching up socially and academically with what has been missed Experiencing (almost) normality by catching up</p> <p>Getting moral, financial, verbal help, support and guidance Getting verbal guidance on the next step towards goals</p> <p>Doing something alone even when it is hard</p> <p>Adjusting to strange and new environment</p> <p>Putting in a lot of effort and time into discovering and exploring the way of</p>
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## Appendix M2: Focused coding

Focused code	Line by line codes	Corresponding coded text
<p><b>6. Taking hold of opportunities despite uncertainty and discomfort ('going for the hard thing')</b></p>	<p>'Winging the uncertainty'/aiming high anyway/tolerating not knowing</p>	<p>I got a like, I was er doing my A-levels I was stressed about how I'm gonna go to university because I haven't been in the country for 3 years so I didn't think I would be able to get a loan. So I was – and I'm a person that hates uncertainty. I hate not knowing stuff. And doing my A-levels I just had to like wing it and do my A-levels and see how it works out and what happens after A-levels if any universities would be able to like offer me a scholarship or something, because I didn't think I would be able to apply for a loan or anything. So I did my A-levels and applied to universities. (Interview 1)</p>
		<p>Participant: And another term. I'm trying to do it this year if it doesn't work it doesn't work, but I'm already getting the language without education (Interview 4)</p>
	<p>Making the most of an opportunity</p>	<p>I did my A-levels and applied to universities. I applied er, to [REDACTED] and applied to many other universities. Got rejected from [REDACTED] I think that's a step of the way, but I feel like er, I don't think I would've got a scholarship at [REDACTED] so I don't think I would have err been able to study at [REDACTED] (Interview 1)</p>
	<p>Grabbing opportunity despite discomfort/learning to go for the hard thing and do it/going for the hard thing and doing it/ doing anyway and seeing how it works out/taking your chances</p>	<p>Like if I was like 'oh I'm not gonna go to that school cos they're bullying me in it', I'm never gonna like, get a bit of English and come to here and try to just say hi or how are you or 'I'm (name)' and things like that. I have to know these things because, I think – I did learn English here but the things that I came with, it helped me. It was a step in my life, I had to do it, I have to feel that I did that thing. I don't think it's like 'oh I wish I did not go in that place' (Interview 2)</p>
		<p>Participant: Yeah. So, I have teachers in classes. I always like – in my English class if she say a word I don't know it or she write it and I don't know how to spell, I straight away put my hand up. I don't like oh, this boy's looking at me like, 'she don't know how to spell'. No. I don't care about what they say or think because I wanna learn. I just put 'how do you spell that?' or 'what does that mean'? it will be like an easy word but I did not hear it before. So, when she say to me what it means it's gonna be stuck in my mind. I'm not gonna forget it. And I'm</p>

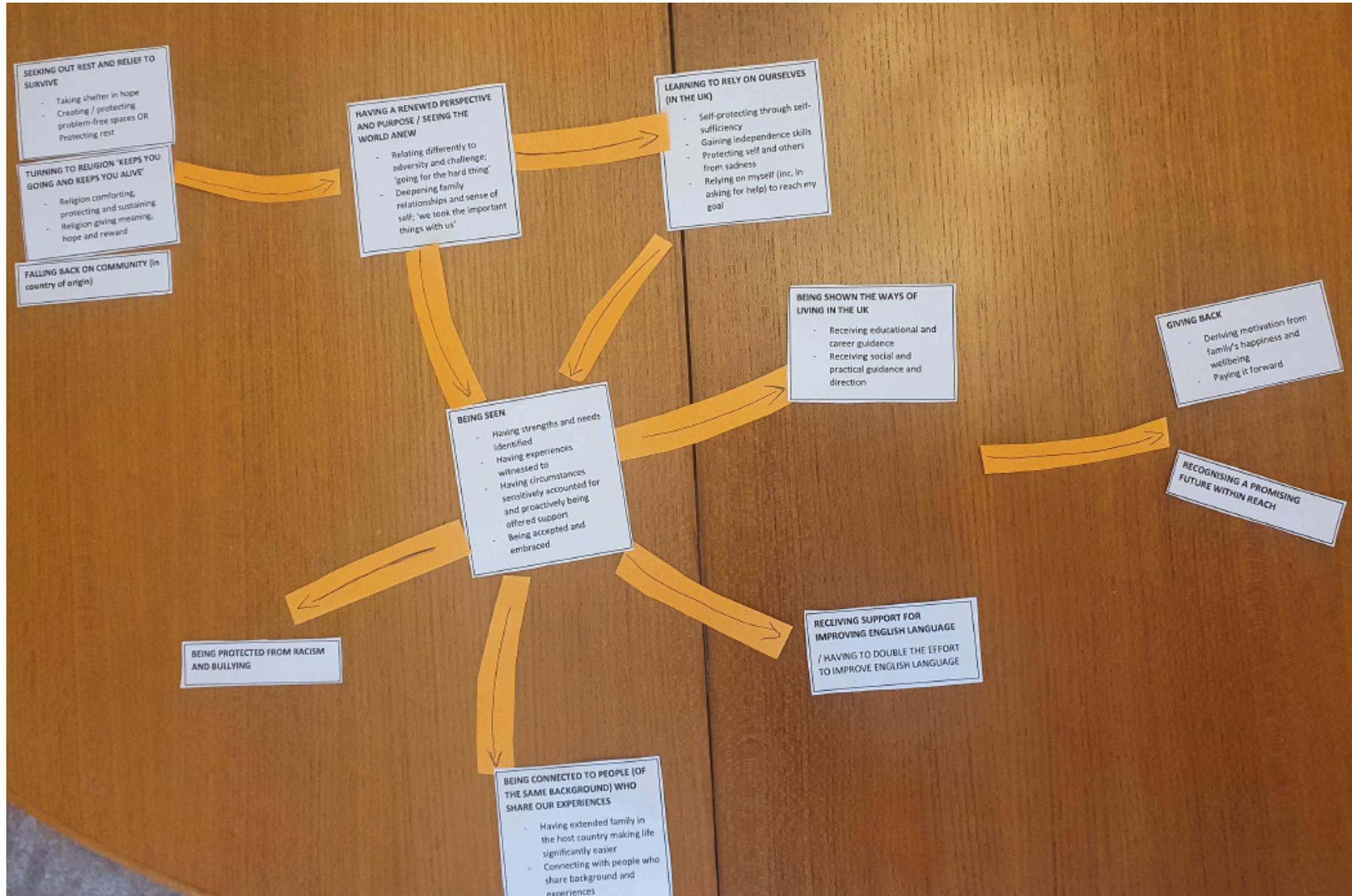
		<p>gonna use it in my exams and get me marks so why should I not ask for it? (Interview 2)</p>
		<p>Participant: Ask for help always. Like don't be shy to ask for help because when you be shy, don't ask for help, you're not gonna understand the thing. If you don't understand it, you will lose it always. Straight away, you don't understand it, you will lose it. You don't have another chance for it. This is your chance, you have to ask, know everything about it, put it in your mind, if you wanna do it, do it. You don't wanna do it – you knew about it. So if like you knew later, you will not be sad 'oh I wish I understand that thing so I should do it and it will be good for me but it's too late I can't do it now. However when I ask always, never I'm gonna be late for anything. I always think do I wanna do that thing or not? I wanna do it, I don't wanna do it, I'm not gonna be sad cos I did not understand it. Cos I did and I chose to not do it. So this is my choice, and we have to like, just...I forgot what I was gonna say. (Interview 2)</p>
		<p>Participant: Don't like 'oh I know that easy thing I'm gonna do that easy thing'. No go for the hard thing and do it. And you will like.. In the end you will get it. You will not like stay forever doing that hard thing and you not getting it, you might not get it from the first time, but mistakes will help. And another time, you will 100% get it right. So do the hard thing don't do the easiest thing because you will just stay sitting or you don't wanna learn. Do the hard thing it will give you loads of things, like, the easy thing will not give it to you. (Interview 2)</p>
		<p>Interviewer: Yeah, ok. And do you have any skills that you brought with you from Syria or ██████ that help you manage difficult times or challenges do you think? Participant: Maybe that like, if I wanna do something, I do it – I don't like get nervous or scared I just do it cos whatever happened, what? What's the worst that's gonna happen? I just do it (Interview 3)</p>
		<p>Participant: I dunno today was just better. I was just really like, you know, I was just shouting the answers without even putting my hand up shouting the answers...and they were all right. (Interview 3)</p>
	<p>Doing something alone even when it is hard</p>	<p>They need to get a lot more, like guidance, like for myself, I had – I had a lot of guidance don't get me wrong, but a lot of times I felt like I needed</p>

		<p>help with something and I had to do something on my own. And at times it was very hard because everything was like strange and everything was just like, er, new to me in a way</p> <p>Interviewer: Yeah Participant: And I feel like, I've put in a lot of effort and time into like discovering and exploring the the...the way of life in the UK and the country and like the culture for me to just kind of like er, be able to socialise with people here and not feel like alienated in a way erm, or even, not just that, but be able to pursue like a normal like, *sigh* how do I phrase this? Just kind of be able to follow er follow...my dreams. Erm. That's not what I mean. But ust like be able to go and find out my path (Interview 1)</p>
	<p>Letting passion and determination override anxiety</p>	<p>Like in class when I wanna answer. I know the answer and I'm a hundr- like 200% sure that this is the right answer, but I don't say it, cos I'm kinda scared to like, you know, maybe this I say it the wrong way or maybe difficult – difficult to me. So – even if the right answer. Interviewer: Hmm. Ah! Participant: But today, in computer science lesson, I was just the guy who was just answering everything. (Interview 3)</p>
	<p>Aiming high</p>	<p>Interviewer: So you've got this 3 years and then you've got to do a one-year Masters? Participant: One or two years- depends. So most of the good universities do it for two years actually (Interview 5)</p>
	<p>Trying every option</p>	<p>So then, erm, so then there was no like other choice apart from like going to the UNHCR in [REDACTED] and telling them this story and requesting humanitarian protection for my brother because [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and er so, the UNHCR heard his story and stuff and my dad's story of other things that happened to him in [REDACTED], and how hard it's become to like keep safe in [REDACTED]. (Interview 1)</p>





Appendix N3: Initial model



Appendix N4: Model after member-checking

