



Migrant Women Opposing Governmental Performative Politics and the Hostile Environment

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<p>Note: The following files were submitted by the author for peer review, but cannot be converted to PDF. You must view these files (e.g. movies) online.</p>	
<p>PASAR_NRPFP.m4v connecting_communities-_performance (360p).mp4</p>	

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Abstract

The increasingly restrictive and punitive hostile environment policies reinforce the Conservative Government stance of being 'tough on immigration'. In public debates the government continues to champion lesser rights for racialised migrants through three key aspects of 'performative politics': the creation of social realities, social identities, and social relationships (Saward 2017)). In this paper we illustrate how the policy of No Recourse to Public Funding (NRPF) is an example of this performative politics, and we also explore how migrant mothers challenge this performative politics through a critical oppositional politics in their everyday lives and through a theatre based project we worked on together. The paper reflects on how the mothers and the researchers draw on Participatory Action Research (PAR) and forum theatre-based approaches to articulate a critical understanding of how the lived experiences of hostile environment policies is underpinned by race, gender, class, migration intersectional identities. Collaborating through PAR allowed the research team and participants to oppose prevailing discourses of the government concerning migrants by offering a creative space, platform, and tools for racialized migrants to try out oppositional representations and develop collective strategies, to publicly resist and counter the demeaning impact speak out against the demeaning impact of hostile environment policies and facilitate their communities to do the same.

Key words: performative politics; intersectional analysis; migrant mothers, No Recourse Public Funding, Participatory Action Research

Introduction

In this article we advance understanding of how the hostile environment is experienced by racialized migrant women. We show how participatory action research, in particular participatory theatre, and walking methods, help them to develop and express a critical and oppositional stance on this policy, which serves to lessen the socially isolating and stigmatizing impact of the hostile environment in their everyday lives. No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) represents one of many increasingly restrictive and punitive policies of the government to show they are being tough on immigration. NRPF is a pernicious form of government performative politics that supports lesser rights for racialised migrants). It has resulted in 1.4 million people, including 175,000 children, living with NRPF. These individuals are unable to claim welfare benefits, forcing them into poverty, destitution, and homelessness (Valdez-Symonds 2020; Gardner 2021:2). The COVID-19 pandemic raised public awareness of the plight of NRPF families. This resulted in criticism of the Conservative Government failure to protect a vulnerable group in society. In our analysis we focus on the lived experience of migrant mothers, specifically those with irregular and undocumented migrant status who are subject to NRPF, as they navigate and oppose governmental performative politics. To be clear, by performative politics, we do not mean a politics that has no effects in the real world. Instead, we draw on Saward's (2017) concept to explore the social identities, social realities and social relationships that are created by the governmental performative politics of NRPF. The paper also analyses the intersectional racialized, gendered and classed aspects of the inequalities created and reinforced by the policy.

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3 The article begins by highlighting the intersectional inequalities underlying the lived experience
4 of hostile environment policies. We then explore how the women engaged in PAR methods to
5 challenge and resist the demeaning treatment and impact of this policy. In our analysis we
6 discuss how migrant mothers can disrupt the performance of government anti-immigration
7 rhetoric by using participatory arts approaches, and the performance of participatory theatre to
8 create an oppositional discourse of their social realities, identities, and relationships, based on
9 their intersecting gender, race, class, disability, and migration status. Using PAR methods
10 generates innovative insights into research as a process of learning and collaborating with lived
11 experience participants (Minkler 2005) on new understandings of the hostile environment rather
12 than simply collecting research data on this issue. We contribute new knowledge on how PAR,
13 through 'symmetrical reciprocity' (Fals Borda 1999), co-creates research with instead of
14 producing research on or for research participants. Our PAR approach creates the conditions
15 for shared ownership of research outcomes and the development of praxis (purposeful
16 knowledge) for social justice (authors). The paper makes a threefold contribution to better
17 understanding the hostile environment, firstly we explore how performative politics creates
18 unequal social identities, realities and relations for migrants. Secondly, we analyse and make
19 explicit the intersectional dimension of these policies. Thirdly, we argue that PAR allows
20 racialized migrant women and researchers to reflect on and develop an oppositional critical
21 stance towards these performative policies, and holds the potential to contribute to a new
22 oppositional performative politics, that contests and performs social identities, relationships and
23 realities that in opposition to the racialized and gendered inequalities created by governmental
24 policies of NRPF and the wider arsenal of hostile environment policies.
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27 **Performative Politics and the Hostile Environment**

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29 The hostile environment represents long-term impact of 'brutal policies' (Liberty 2019:4) of state
30 sanctioned discrimination against racialised migrants in the UK. Not only does it deter racialised
31 migrants from accessing NHS healthcare, social welfare, and housing, but it also embeds
32 hostilities within public services and communities (Flynn 2015). No Recourse to Public Funds is
33 a condition imposed on people with limited leave to enter or remain and represents one of many
34 increasingly restrictive and punitive policies of the government to show they are being tough on
35 immigration ((Gardner, 2021). The burden of NRPF disproportionately affects racialised
36 migrants. These are recently arrived, asylum seekers and refugees, that share the common
37 experience of being systemically assigned a racialised status (authors). The Citizens Advice
38 Bureau, (2020) reported that 82% of they helped with an imposed NRPF condition, were Black,
39 Asian or from another ethnic minority in 2019-2020. While purportedly targeting undocumented
40 migrants, it is important to acknowledge that this policy also affects racialized citizens: people
41 who hold British citizenship, born or originating former UK colonies in Africa, Asia and the
42 Caribbean who are misclassified and treated as migrants. For example, the 500,000 plus
43 people who arrived in the UK from former Caribbean Commonwealth nation before 1971 ended
44 up being wrongfully classed as illegal immigrants under the 'Windrush Scandal'. These
45 individuals were denied healthcare and social welfare rights and threatened with deportation
46 and/or deported as a result (Guardian 2018; Goodfellow 2019). Charitable organisations have
47 challenged the legality of NRPF on grounds that migrants subject to NPRF are subjected to
48 intersectional oppressions, e.g. black pregnant women, low-income lone mothers caring for
49 young children, disabled people, (Unity Project 2019). In this challenge they highlighted that the
50 policy is fundamentally racist because it disproportionately affects Black British Children. The
51 Children's Society's report (2020) also revealed that 90% of the families involved in their study
52 had at least one Black British child.
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3 In recent years the Conservative Government has engaged in 'performative politics' (Saward
4 2017) to reinforce racialised migrants' status as 'outsiders' in UK society and a threat to national
5 solidarity. This 'performative politics' perpetuates the idea that migrants have lesser rights,
6 compared to non-racialised citizens and thus reinforces in the public imagination comparisons
7 between 'citizens' and 'migrants', and a social reality that there are divisions between the two
8 groups (ie 'them and 'us'), which inform how both groups relate to each other and also their
9 social relationships and social status in wider society. We define 'racialised migrants' as
10 encompassing diverse migrant groups, such as recently arrived, asylum seekers and refugees,
11 that share the common experience of being systemically assigned a racialised status. It also is
12 relevant to racialized citizens: people who hold British citizenship, born in or originating from
13 former UK colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, but are misclassified and treated as
14 migrants (authors).
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17 The first element of government performative politics is enacted by the Conservative
18 Government blaming the migration for a host of national problems, such as the cost-of-living
19 crisis, failing health and public infrastructure (Guardian 2022). This permits the government to
20 'perform' an identity of 'being tough on immigration'. This 'toughness' encompasses the
21 discursive and performative enactment of racialized hierarchies of migrants, with refugees,
22 asylum seekers, and other migrants from the Global South portrayed as the least desirable. A
23 further element of the government's performative politics is enacted by the social relationships
24 produced by hostile environment policies. Yuval-Davis et al (2018), describe the divisive
25 everyday bordering that has resulted from the government's action of being 'tough on
26 immigration'. This study indicates how members and institutions of society are called upon to
27 act as border guards, surveilling others' right to access services, employment, or housing. This
28 also include agencies and people who are not part of government institutions (e.g landlords,
29 hospitals, social security offers), but are performing the governmental stance of 'toughness' on
30 immigration.
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33 The implicit effect of the performative politics on migrants - regardless of whether they are
34 documented or not - is to make the completion of the path towards full citizenship as difficult as
35 possible, forcing as many people as possible to abandon their efforts for settlement and return
36 abroad (Flynn 2005; El-Enany 2020; Griffiths and Yeo, 2021). This anti-immigration rhetoric
37 also has implicit effects on the white-majority population. It exists at a time when many feel their
38 citizenship is being devalued because of economic austerity, cutbacks to welfare and public
39 services, the rising cost of living, and food and fuel shortages. These social and economic
40 issues have resulted in uncertainties about the extent to which British citizenship protects them
41 from social risks (Fortier 2021). Therefore, it could be argued that the performative politics of
42 the hostile environment policies is an attempt by government to demarcate and delineate
43 migrants as lesser than British citizens, and therefore 'less deserving' of social welfare (The
44 Guardian, 2013; Guentner et al. 2016).
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46
47 NRPF as a hostile environment policy constitutes a performative politics reinforcing migrants as
48 having lesser rights, identifies them and clearly distinguishes them as non-citizens and is
49 operationalised in ensuring social relationships that involve surveillance and policing of
50 whether people count as migrants and should therefore be denied access to services, rights,
51 and resources. However, performance politics, although deeply entrenched, is inherently
52 unstable and vulnerable to being challenged by counter arguments and critical thinking as well
53 as misrecognition or misreading by the audience viewing the performance (Rai, 2015: 1180).
54 This means that while the UK has seen a hardening of anti-migration discourses and a
55 mainstream acceptance of ideas of lesser rights for racialized migrants that had long been a
56 feature of the far right, this governmental performative politics can also motivate and strengthen
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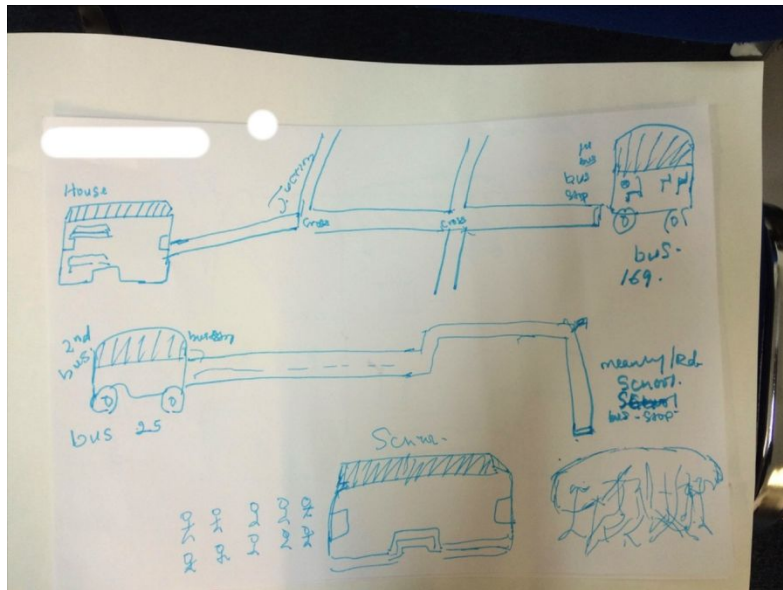
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3 solidarities and challenge everyday bordering (cf. Jones et al 2017). One of the problematic
4 effects of the hostile environment policies is that it constitutes racialized migrants as illegitimate
5 participants in shaping politics, which is seen as a privilege limited to members of the nation.
6 While racialized migrants affected by the NRPF policy are often forced into everyday struggles
7 for survival which make it more difficult for them to participate in political deliberation, our study
8 explores how migrant communities targeted by NRPF policies and constructed as social
9 outsiders can challenge, disrupt, and resist this governmental performative politics. For
10 researchers, participatory action research (PAR) provides a creative space and tools in which to
11 counter and develop alternative narrative of racialised migrants in collaboration with the very
12 people subject to surveillance, policing, and the hostile environment.
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17 **Research Methodology**

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19 Our project, entitled [authors] uses PAR, specifically participatory theatre and walking methods
20 to explore the experiences of migrant women and young girls subjected to intersecting
21 oppressions, including a group of migrant mothers with NRPF (authors). We worked with a
22 group of 20 mothers from West Africa and the Caribbean affected by the No Recourse to Public
23 Funds Policy, meeting for 3 hours each week over a four-month period in 2016-17. Participants
24 were recruited through our partner organization, Praxis, a migrant rights advice and advocacy
25 organization. At the time of the research fieldwork, all the participants had been living in London
26 for between 11 and 24 years. Ethical approval was gained through the [University Ethics
27 Committee, anonymized]. All participants provided informed written consent to take part in the
28 study, and for images to be published. The research workshops utilised forum theatre (authors),
29 a key tool of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, and waling methods (authors). In terms of the
30 former, participants are invited to show a particular situation of oppression or a dilemma, they
31 have experienced themselves, and the group is invited to intervene in the scene to try out
32 strategies of resistance. Boal understood forum theatre to be a rehearsal for social change
33 outside of the theatre space. With regards to the latter, walking as a methodology that helps us
34 to understand peoples 'routes and mobilities' and that 'social relations are not enacted in situ
35 but paced out along the ground' (Ingold and Vergunst 2008) Walking as a participatory
36 research method also allows the recovery of personal biographies and experiences and
37 facilitates a subject-subject relationship between the co-walkers that can exemplify 'symmetrical
38 reciprocity' (Fals Borda 1999). Walking methods encourage multi-sensory and spatial ways of
39 knowing, feeling and understanding, especially in this research, in relation to how women
40 articulate their social identities, social realities and social relationships. Mapping their daily
41 walks illustrates this.
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44 **Example of map**

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The stories that are told on the move and then shared in the theatre space or workshops through theatre making or forum theatre is an example of what (authors) calls 'ethno-mimesis' at 'the intersection of contemporary feminist theory, socio-cultural research and experimental/alternative forms of re-presentation/interpretation' (authors). Ethno-mimesis is defined as a methodological process and practice constituted through the integration of participatory, mobile and creative research methods, with art making, in this case, theatre forms. Thus, making 'more accessible the contested and multiple versions of reality, and the unheard voices and experiences' of racialised women and mothers 'who may consider themselves powerless' (authors).

To create a counter-narrative to the government performative policies concerning migrants, we combine and mobilize participatory theatre and walking to reflect on lived experiences of the NPRF policy, and to create collective knowledge and shared understanding of the impact of this hostile environment (authors). During the forum theatre workshops, the women used performance techniques to try out new ways of claiming citizenship rights that are denied to them by the state. See film: Margins to Centre Stage presents Black Women Act!).

Their performances positioned them in centre stage as rights claiming subjects challenged the government narrative that they are undeserving of social rights; and outsiders to the political process of the nation (authors). The women also shared their reflections on the impact of these workshops in creating oppositional narratives of the hostile environment policy in follow-up individual semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions

We acknowledge that PAR methods are not a panacea to solving all societal problems. The high costs and time-consuming nature associated with this methodological approach also mean that it is not feasible and practical for all social research. Furthermore, we acknowledge that a PAR research project does not have the power to effect social and political change. It has been important in our project to discuss this with participants, reflecting on the fact that our research project is limited to articulating an alternative or oppositional politics. We reflected together with participants that such oppositional performances are important as they disrupt the logics of exclusion and subordination of racialized migrants through the hostile environment. Yet, while our project was able to articulate the 'suffering caused by these policies' as Elaine, one of the

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3 participants argued, it takes a long time and many socio-political efforts to change or abolish the
4 NRPF policy, *'but at least we are working towards it'*. Nonetheless, a key strength of PAR
5 methods in helping us to elicit lived experience accounts of the hostile environment is that it
6 emphasises participation and action by the communities most affected by the research. PAR is
7 an inclusive approach that centres the voices of oppressed groups in policy debates, typically
8 ignored in conventional qualitative or quantitative analysis, in a collective effort to transform and
9 create meaningful change in society. PAR values embodied knowledge. Its core principles of
10 trust, flattening hierarchical power structures in social research and bottom-up/grassroots
11 approaches for community needs and learning, ensures local knowledge, such as the lived
12 experience of the hostile environment, are prioritised and valued in the knowledge production
13 processes. For example, our project created a model for bringing together practitioners and
14 migrant mothers living with NRPF to engage with each other through creative and innovative
15 methods for researching migrant families' citizenship, through arts based participatory methods
16 of walking stories and forum theatre. Our research is located within a transformative ethos of
17 Participatory Action Research, which is allied with movements for social justice, following the
18 approaches of Freire and Fals-Borda (Bacal 2018:52). Therefore, we use PAR in this study to
19 facilitate the space and time for the women to share their accounts of the hostile environment, to
20 reflect collectively with others and build solidarities through the sharing of these experiences.
21 The PAR process of learning together (Minkler 2005) and 'symmetrical reciprocity' (Fals Borda
22 1999) where we are working *with not on or for the* migrant women, results in the development of
23 purposeful knowledge and the co-production of the research outcomes.
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29 **Opposing the hostile environment**

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31 An important way the group challenged the performative politics of NRPF, which portrays them
32 as 'less deserving' than national citizens, is to use theatre performance to show how unjust the
33 policy worsens gender, race, class, intersectional inequalities. Black feminists' activists and
34 scholars identify these intersectional social divisions as mutually reinforcing, affecting people's
35 lives simultaneously (Crenshaw 1989; authors). Different forms of oppression work together and
36 intermesh (Hill-Collins and Bilge 2020). Applying an intersectional analysis to racialised migrant
37 women's lives helps us to understand how interlocking systems of oppression operate through,
38 what black feminist scholar Hill-Collins (2009:295–309) defines as, a 'matrix of domination': '(1)
39 the structural domain, including the law and institutions, which organise oppression, (2) the
40 disciplinary domain, consisting of bureaucracy and administration, which manages it, (3) the
41 hegemonic domain, which justifies oppressions through ideology, culture and consciousness,
42 and (4) the interpersonal level that affects everyday life and experience'.
43

44 In our study the theatre workshops acted as a 'liminal space', (authors), to illuminate
45 understanding of this matrix by creatively exploring how their intersectional identities (black,
46 working class, migrant women) impact their lived experience of NRPF, and how they navigate
47 the social realities of being forced further into poverty, destitution, and worsening health
48 conditions. What emerges from the liminal space is not necessarily a definitive answer, but
49 rather an alternative way of understanding social realities where artistic, political, cultural and
50 social ideas and concerts is in constant flux and contestation (Andrews et al, 2019). One of the
51 participants, Susan, for example, a mother living 8 years under the NRPF condition reflected:
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54 *I have gone through trauma, and I suffer a lot of mental [health] problems. Do you know*
55 *our children also have lots of trauma. My eldest son almost killed himself because he*
56 *couldn't find work and he got offered apprenticeship by [company] but he couldn't take*
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3 *that up too because he did not have his papers. I'm still in trauma, and my children are in*
4 *trauma. These people don't treat us black people as humans, they don't have mercy on*
5 *us migrant women and our children. My youngest son was one years old, he had terrible*
6 *asthma, and did you know [hospital] refused him [treatment] because I couldn't afford*
7 *the medicine [...] Now he is at school, I have problems with his racist teachers who are*
8 *always checking up on me. We go through terrible traumas [...]. Nobody knows about*
9 *what we are suffering, we suffer in silence, and I don't understand how they can allow*
10 *the children to suffer, our children have terrible mental problems.*
11

12 Susan's account, and other stories shared by the women, shed light on the inhumane effects of
13 the policy. Their stories also reveal other aspects of intersectional inequalities, which is often
14 hidden from research addressing racialised migrant women's experiences of the hostile
15 environment. Four of the women in our study had a disability or they acted as carers for family
16 members with long-term disabilities, requiring complex health and social care. These women
17 were denied access to welfare benefits such as social carers support and disability living
18 allowance due to their NRPF status, making it difficult to meet their health and social care
19 needs. A couple of participants also gained long-term chronic ill-health. Workshop discussions
20 revealed that their NRPF status left little choice than for these women to take up precarious jobs
21 and work in setting with unsafe employment practices to financially support their families. This
22 was the case for Ora, a migrant mother who worked as a cleaner, by a contracting company
23 that provided cleaning services for a public transport company. Ora was not officially registered
24 as employed by this company, being paid 'under the counter', cash-in-hand. One day at work
25 Ora injured her back. She was ineligible for paid sick leave, and the injury prevented her from
26 returning to work. Ora was not compensated for her injury by her employers, and her NRPF
27 status meant that she was ineligible for a healthcare referral providing specialist rehabilitative
28 treatment. As a result of this, Ora has been left with a long-term chronic backpain and
29 depression, which has negatively impacted her physical mobility, mental health and quality of
30 life. Ora's experience shows how, intersections of gender, racialised, class coupled with an
31 irregular migrant status, make migrant women highly vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace.
32 The hyper-precarity of their employment means that they are often unable to access services
33 that protected their employment rights or financial compensation for injuries at work.
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37 During the workshops, the women shared many individual stories of discrimination, exploitation,
38 and mistreatment, by employers and colleagues in the workplace, and by service providers in
39 education and healthcare settings, and government and statutory agencies. The very act of
40 collectively verbalizing and publicly sharing their experiences to community audiences,
41 policymakers, and practitioners, enabled the women to challenge the status ascribed by the
42 government as 'lesser migrants' with lesser rights to speak out against injustices. By sharing
43 their experiences in public forums, allowed for the representation and voice of the women to be
44 centred in policy and practice debates and intervention addressing migrants' rights. The women
45 participated and co-facilitated a series of policy workshops where they spoke directly to
46 policymakers, social workers and teachers, and other social care and community practitioners
47 about the social realities of NRPF and the hostile environment policy. They also took part in is
48 invited talk, organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Migration, at the House of
49 Commons, where they led a participatory theatre session and performance about the the racial
50 and gendered injustice of NRPF on lived experiences. The opportunity to speak directly to
51 policymakers and advocate for themselves provided the women with increased confidence to
52 come together to develop shared knowledge with others subjected to NRPF, and to present an
53 counternarrative to the hegemonic domain of the government who create pathologizing
54 narratives about migrants and false ideologies of migrants as outsiders with lesser rights
55 (Benhabib, 2004).: to justify their continued oppression. The below account by Denise, shows
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3 the importance of collective voice for speaking out and about shared experiences of NRPF. Not
4 only do these interpersonal relations embolden and empower the women to challenge pathology
5 discourses and people's negative perceptions, but this also builds their confidence to question
6 and challenge, the structural domains (ie, the law and institutions), which Hill-Collins defines as
7 organising oppression within the matrix of domination. Denise reflecting on her discussion with
8 politicians about the lived experience of NRPF recounts:
9

10 *The House of Commons presentation performance and research helped to boost my*
11 *confidence, you are actually acting out what happens in everyday life ...because it's not*
12 *just saying it but you are showing it ... we can tell our stories to the politicians so they*
13 *realise we are still human beings...it's empowering us black women, because this*
14 *country is very racist towards...migrant black women ... It's given me the confidence,*
15 *courage, boldness, and knowledge to challenge the system, and not feel intimidated.*
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17

18 Participating in the study and sharing their experiences to policymakers about the human costs
19 of NRPF provided the women with an understanding that they were not to blame for the
20 circumstances they found themselves in. It enabled them to make an explicit connection
21 between their intersectional inequality (on account of their race, gender, and migrant identities),
22 and how government bodies and institutions used these identities to justify their treatment of the
23 NRPF people. This insight similarly provided the women with the confidence that they had the
24 right to challenge discriminatory behaviour. This is reinforced by Elaine, who is primary carer of
25 a disabled son, during her reflections on the impact of the participatory theatre workshops. She
26 comments:
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29 *Before I joined this project, I was reluctant to say anything about what is happening to*
30 *but since doing the performances, I now have confidence to challenge my son's school.*
31 *They did not want to give him a care plan and before I didn't say anything but now I'm*
32 *able to tell them with confidence about certain issues [about] what he needs in his care*
33 *plan. Now I have spoken with my social worker, I worked with her and we've*
34 *[completed] the form so he can have a care plan. Before, I wouldn't do this because of*
35 *my immigration status. I felt like an outcast, I felt alone but meeting with the ladies [in the*
36 *project workshops] has been therapeutic for me and it really boosted my confidence.*
37 *Now I can actually approach anyone, [such as] teacher, lawyer, housing people, social*
38 *worker and I feel confident in relating my story in any setting or getting this information*
39 *across to them about the effects of no recourse.*
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43 The collective work of challenging the ascribed identity as 'outcast', in Elaine's words, develop
44 for these women with increased skills, confidence and knowledge to 'claim the right to claim
45 rights', across diverse institutions (Isin 2017). In Elaine's case, for example, she used this
46 knowledge and confidence to claim her right to request that her son has access to the required
47 special education resources and teaching assistance in school to support his complex learning
48 needs.
49

50 As the above examples of accounts Susan, Denise, Elaine by show, forum theatre workshops
51 provided a supportive environment and mechanism to challenge and resist the negative
52 ideologies of hegemonic discourses concerning racialised migrants, performed by government
53 hostile environment policy, and by doing so, co-creating alternative and oppositional
54 perspectives to counter the government's performative politics about racialised migrants. Whilst
55 we acknowledge that this counter narrative is small scale, and localised, we believe it is an
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3 important intervention because by speaking up and out about NRPF, this removes the 'victim-
4 blaming' and stigmatising effects individuals feel who are subject to this policy. The collective
5 act of shared story-telling and performing these stories in theatre forms (interactive theatre or
6 forum theatre) reduces the social isolation, shame and fear typically felt by people living with
7 NRPF (Marziale et al, forthcoming) and increases solidarity and an ethic of care that champions
8 counter narratives that centre on social justice.
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10 **Analysing performative spaces**

11
12 During the workshops we co-created with the women forum theatre scenes about their
13 experiences in a range of institutional settings. These included their children's schools,
14 workplace settings, lawyer and social work offices, immigration reporting centre. The forum
15 theatre scenes co-created in these sites provided important performative spaces for the
16 mothers to share, reflect, oppose stereotypical constructions of migrants, and to offer counter
17 narratives on their shared experiences of the hostile environment. The co-created scenes
18 developed also enabled analysis of how intersectional identities, and the matrix of domination,
19 unfolds through their daily lived experiences of NRPF policy. In the following section, we discuss
20 two scenes co-created with the women. For context, the first scene is in a workplace setting and
21 the second, an immigration reporting centre (see video extract: Connecting Communities
22 Performance).
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25 *Workplace Scene:* This scene is based on an experience by Elaine, who arrived from the
26 Caribbean in the UK in 2005. Elaine was allowed to remain in the UK to work for a further 2
27 years after completing a period of study. However, she was not able to find a job that matched
28 her qualifications which she believes was due to racism among employers. Elaine worked part
29 time for a large supermarket chain as a retail assistant. After giving birth to her son Elaine was
30 put on unfavourable shifts working through the night, meaning she could not find public
31 transport to get into work. Elaine complained about this and asked her union representative to
32 support her. However, instead of supporting her, the union representative told her that as an
33 immigrant, she should feel grateful for having a job in the first place! As the union representative
34 withheld their support to Elaine, she continued to complain about her situation.
35
36

37 *And I said to [my manager] "I'm the only one on a bus at 4.00am in the morning," and*
38 *[...] I am frightened because it's an area I don't really know. She [manager] said to me,*
39 *"Well, let your husband come and meet you," I said, "Well, what about my son? He's*
40 *only nine months old [...]. She said, "Well, tell him to bundle him up and bring him, carry*
41 *him out". At 4.00am in the mornings.*
42

43 Elaine felt that she was penalised by management for her complaints, not only by giving her
44 shifts that were difficult for her, but also by the allocation of tasks:
45

46 *They changed my work schedule, and they gave me the most demeaning jobs. [...] And*
47 *they only did that to migrants [...] all the other white people were there. They become*
48 *managers. So, that was the culture in [large supermarkets].*
49

50
51 When she was required to take time off work to regularly report to the Home Office's
52 immigration reporting centre, the situation worsened. Despite managers' assurance to treat her
53 immigration status as confidential, they shared this with co-workers and Elaine soon found that
54 she was ostracized in the workplace, stigmatized as an 'illegal' migrant. Elaine's story resonated
55 with many participants in our workshop, who expressed being treated less favourably or forced
56 out of work once their irregular migrant status was publicly revealed. We reflected on how
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3 migrant status means that women are treated less humanely by their colleagues, and they are
4 not afforded the same employment rights and protection in the workplace as other citizens and
5 residents. We co-created scenes as a way to develop and try out ideas on how Elaine could
6 have challenged her manager who was responsible for sharing confidential information about
7 her immigration status, and her co-workers contributed to sharing personal information without
8 censure from management. This experience allowed other women to open and disclose similar
9 experiences of workplace bullying and harassment, and their feelings of powerlessness to
10 challenge the situation or seek redress because of the immigration status, and as also noted
11 above, how this leaves them exposed and vulnerable to exploitation at work. We also used
12 Elaine's story to co-create scenes where we could try out and test different approaches to
13 getting her manager to change her shift patterns from the night shift to day-time working hours.
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16 *Immigration Reporting Centre:* The second scene is based at an immigration reporting centre in
17 central London. Attendance at these immigration reporting centres is a mandatory condition
18 imposed on migrants awaiting permission to remain in the UK. The women described how the
19 experience of attending these centres, sometimes twice weekly, is demeaning and
20 dehumanising because of the hostile and aggressive manner they were treated by staff
21 members. Patience, a single mother of three who was originally from Nigeria, and had been in
22 the UK for 9 years, described her experience of visiting the reporting centre when she was 8
23 months pregnant.
24

25 *Because you're black, they don't treat us as humans, they treat you like an animal in*
26 *London Bridge [reporting centre], I was pregnant, three weeks or two weeks away [from*
27 *delivery].. I was in the queue, I was tired, I was fed up, they said, "your feet are not*
28 *pregnant?" I was about to deliver just – My leg was swelling, I showed them, they said*
29 *nothing they could do.*
30

31 Patience's account resonated with the other women and drawing on the group's collective share
32 a real-life experience of harassment by staff working in the reporting centres. This allowed the
33 women to re-enact this story based on the account shared by Patience. In the workshop, we
34 start the performance of the scene with a long queue of women snaking their way to the
35 reporting centre's front entrance, and Patience, re-enacting her story, taking on her real-life role
36 of the pregnant lady, who is standing at the back of the queue. The participants, playing the role
37 of other people in the queue, intervened in the scene by offering Patience a place at the front of
38 the queue. In the next scene, Patience is standing at the front of the queue. She is met by the
39 security officers, who turn her back and ask her to return to the back of the queue, despite
40 protests from the other women that she should be seen first. The participant playing the security
41 officer's role told her she had to wait in line at the queue, despite her pregnancy complications
42 because in the words of the security officer, "your feet are not pregnant?".
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45 Performing the scene gave the women an opportunity to reflect on and show other hostile
46 behaviour directed towards them which had not emerged during our interviews; it revealed the
47 intimidatory and threatening behaviour they experienced by staff members at the reporting
48 centres. The scene also allowed participants to reflect on the sexual harassment and gender
49 violence they experienced by staff members at the reporting centre. We developed scenes
50 based on the women's accounts of the security guard aggressively and physically violating their
51 personal space, patting them down, touching them in a sexually inappropriate way, all under the
52 guise of searching through their personal property. Migrant women with insecure migrant status
53 face increased risk of sexual violence and harassment (Dickson and Rosen 2021)). As
54 highlighted by Patience above, the women believed that the hostile and dehumanising treatment
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3 black women received at the hands of staff at the reporting centre was because of their
4 intersecting race, gender, low socio-economic and immigration status.
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6 Both examples, drawing from Elaine and Patience's experiences, highlight the embodied
7 experience of intersectional discrimination that is difficult to verbalise through ethnographic
8 interviews alone. The women highlighted the ever-present fear that if they speak out against
9 the harassment, they would be detained, deported, and permanently separated from their
10 family. The shared stories and sense of recognition by the migrant women concerning the social
11 realities of NRPF demonstrate the value of intersectional analysis for understanding multiple,
12 connecting oppressions based on gender, race, class, and migration. It encouraged the women
13 to understand the complex web of inequalities that causes the situation they find themselves in.
14 The theatre performance provided the women with the creative space, outside of their usual
15 experiences, and the tools to critically reflect and apply understanding the 'matrix of domination'
16 to their own social realities.
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19 In both Elaine and Patience's cases, the immigration regime, and the Home Office, represent
20 the structural domain of power; the Home Office as an institution of the state implements the
21 hostile environment policies that deny racialized migrant women access to welfare support,
22 reproducing their 'outsider' status. This intersects with the disciplinary domain of power,
23 characterised by the supermarket and immigration reporting centre which implement rulings
24 determined by government bureaucracies, and government actions of control, surveillance,
25 intimidation to racially discriminate against and oppress black migrant women. A third
26 interlocking process, the hegemonic domain of power results from a system of ideas and values
27 that justifies discriminatory practices. This refers to normalizing and reiterative discourses in the
28 UK that continue to racialise immigration policies and de-humanize women subjected to NRPF,
29 as witnessed by the trade union representative in Elaine's workplace, who accepted as common
30 sense that, as a racialized migrant, Elaine, should accept and internalise the idea that she holds
31 lesser rights. Likewise, when her co-workers' stigmatized Elaine as 'illegal immigrant' and
32 ostracized her, this reflects the way in which hostile environment policies create social realities,
33 identities and power relationships based on (assumed) immigration status. In a similar vein, the
34 security staff at the immigration reporting centre internalized the idea that the women's
35 gendered, racialized and immigration status and social position made them 'acceptable' targets
36 of sexual harassment and intimidation.
37

38 This hegemonic domain of power combines with the interpersonal domain of everyday
39 'routinized daily practices of interaction at the microlevel of social organisation' (Hill-Collins:
40 2009:287). This allows individuals to perpetuate the subordination of others. These are clearly
41 demonstrated in both theatre scenes. As is evident by the scenes, the mothers gain important
42 critical skills and creative tools that equip them with developing a critical consciousness and in
43 turn to adopt a critical and well evidenced oppositional stance to governmental performative
44 politics of hostile environment policies.
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46

47 **Conclusion**

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49 In conclusion we argue that the government's extension of the NRPF condition to everyone
50 subject to migration control is an element of the government's performative politics of the hostile
51 environment. By this we do not mean that the hostile environment is only symbolic, but that it is
52 intended to create materially and hegemonically a separate category of migrants with lesser
53 rights and addresses not only migrants but also the wider public to show and perform the
54 'toughness' of its immigration policies.
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3 The policies furthermore create the social identity of 'potential illegal migrant', which is highly
4 stigmatized and opens people up to exploitation by employers, community members and others
5 on whom they depend for their survival. Using PAR methods, such as walking and forum
6 theatre, creates a liminal space for collective sharing and reflection by migrant women to build
7 bonds of support and solidarity with each other, and to reject the self-blame and stigmatization of
8 the hostile environment policies attributed to them. Sharing these experiences and creating
9 collective stories to intervene in government debates about racialised migrants generates new
10 insights into NPRF because it allows people, in this case women, with lived experience the
11 space to reflect on underlying intersectional structural issues, to share these with policy and
12 professional practitioners who continue to cast them as 'passive victims' rather than active
13 agents with the confidence to public speak out against the injustices of these policies and claim
14 'the right to claim rights' (Isin 2017). Although we are mindful of the limitations of PAR, we are
15 hopeful of its potential to centre the voices and shed light on experiences of people and
16 communities subjected to this policy, as these are typically hidden in public debates about
17 migrants. In providing a platform for the women to share their accounts of the hostile
18 environment, to reflect collectively with others and build solidarities through the sharing of these
19 experiences, we reveal that our research is located within a transformative ethos of Participatory
20 Action Research and allied to movements for social justice.
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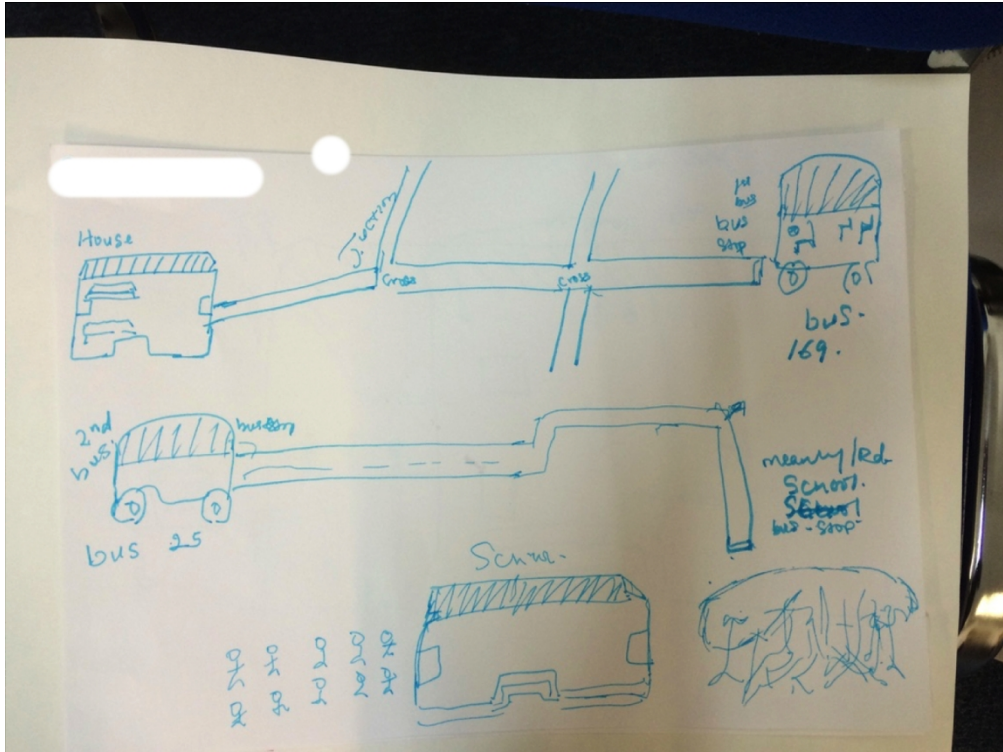
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Example of map

519x389mm (72 x 72 DPI)

Description of supplementary materials

Image: Example of walking map - Supplemental material for **Migrant Women Opposing Governmental Performative Politics and the Hostile Environment** by Tracey Reynolds, Umut Erel and Maggie O'Neill in Sociological Research Online.

Film: Margins to Centre Stage presents Black Women Act! - Supplemental material for **Migrant Women Opposing Governmental Performative Politics and the Hostile Environment** by Tracey Reynolds, Umut Erel and Maggie O'Neill in Sociological Research Online.

Video Extract: Connecting Communities Performance - Supplemental material for **Migrant Women Opposing Governmental Performative Politics and the Hostile Environment** by Tracey Reynolds, Umut Erel and Maggie O'Neill in Sociological Research Online.

For Peer Review