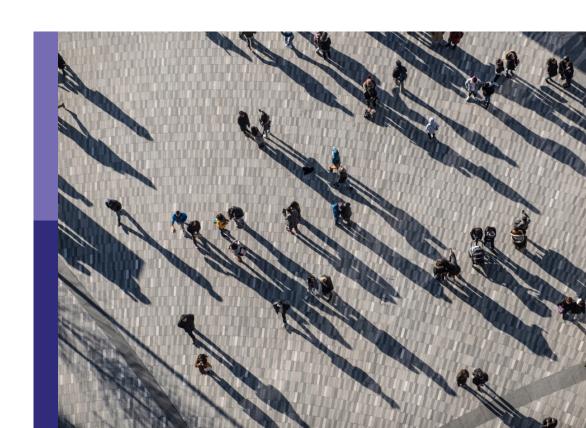# Bodies at borders: Analyzing the objectification and containment of migrants at border crossing

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Bodies at borders: Analyzing the objectification and containment of migrants at border crossing

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Editorial: Bodies at borders: analyzing the objectification and containment of migrants at border crossing

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Editorial on the Research Topic
Bodies at borders: analyzing the objectification and containment of
migrants at border crossing

Introduction

By the end of 2022, the number of forcibly displaced people globally had reached 108.4 million as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, and events seriously disturbing public order (UNHCR, 2023). Efforts to prevent these people from crossing national boundaries have resulted in draconian legislation and the vilification of migrants at various international borders. In the Mediterranean, at the border with "fortress Europe," there have been thousands of fatalities as migrants risk the treacherous crossing in tiny boats (IMO, 2023). The so-called "weaponization of migration" is apparent in recent events on the Belarussian–Polish border, with hundreds of asylum seekers trapped between rival forces of armed soldiers and subject to "pushbacks" (Guardian Newspaper, 2023). Under the UK government's "hostile environment" policy, many legal immigration routes have been closed, and the rights of asylum seekers have been severely curtailed (Webber, 2019). The so-called "migrant caravan," which began in Honduras in October 2018, prompted the US and Mexican governments to deploy active-duty military officers to the border, creating more chaos in the area than ever before (Guardian Newspaper, 2022).

Migration, displacement, and border controls are not new, and it can be illuminating to look at previous historical events in order to understand changes and continuities over time. This Research Topic, "Bodies at the border," brings together a range of scholars, including well-established academics and early-career researchers, who present new theoretical approaches, empirical research, and analysis from diverse regions across the world, including the Global South where most migrants and refugees are located.

Using an intersectional lens, our collection of articles explores the complex interplay of diverse aspects of identities including class, age, ethnicity, religion, and gender. In doing so, we seek to advance knowledge on:

- the various policy measures that governments enact to control specific categories of international migration (e.g., Saurombe and Zinatsa; Willers; Sanchez).
- learning lessons from history and previous waves of migration (e.g., Wemyss).
- the use and misuse of a "migrant crisis narrative" (e.g., Grabowska).
- how migrants seek to resist negative representations and discriminatory policies in order to assert their own agency in negotiating national borders (e.g., Ma; Sanchez).
- theoretical and conceptual frameworks that offer new, nuanced understandings of these topics (e.g., López and Ryan).
- the ethical and empirical challenges of researching these topics in contexts that can be risky to both the researchers and participants (e.g., Merlín-Escorza et al.).
- how local populations and organizations react and behave toward "humanitarian tragedies" (e.g., Kyliushyk and Jastrzebowska).

This Research Topic brings together nine articles from around the world in order to examine border crossings in varied contexts and against different policy measures. Moreover, the Research Topic highlights the use of a range of research methods to explore migrants' experiences.

Using critical autoethnography, Ma focuses on her lived experiences as a descendant of forcibly displaced Chinese–Vietnamese people. Her article critically interrogates colonialism and racialization in the Canadian context and how these have produced oppressive policies and practices that have had specific implications for her own family.

Merlín-Escorza et al. use rich ethnographic methods to explore shelter organizations in two countries, the Netherlands and Mexico. While these organizations play a role in protecting the rights of migrants, the article contributes to understanding the fine line between care and control practices in these shelters.

Two articles examine crossings at the Polish border. Kyliushyk and Jastrzebowska use a survey to analyze aid giving and receiving in the context of the mass movement of people from Ukraine to Poland caused by the Russian war on Ukraine, which started in February 2022. The article shows differences between what migrants need and what is offered to them in Poland, addressing both short-term and long-term perspectives. Drawing on a Delphi survey from a large European project, Grabowska focuses in particular on the Belarussian and Ukrainian borders with Poland, with a reference to the so-called "migrant crisis of 2015," but also explores the positions and dilemmas of stakeholders in treating both refugees in 2015 and Russian war refugees from Ukraine in 2022. She explores the societal dangers of migrant "crises" narratives, including "political functionality" to distract attention away from other kinds of social problems.

Also engaging with narratives, López and Ryan draw on rich qualitative data to analyze the stories of Afghans entering the UK at different periods of time and via varied routes. Building on "journey as a narrative device," this article uses case studies to explore how migrants tell their stories and present agency, within extremely hazardous situations, to achieve their "imagined futures."

Also in the UK, Wemyss uses a historically informed lens and notions of "bordering" and intersectionality, as well as archival data, to examine discourses and practices that target seafarers, especially those recruited from the Global South. In doing so, this article analyzes how these seafarers, living and working onboard ships, embody the border in their everyday lives.

Shifting the lens to migratory movements within the Global South, two articles contribute a new understanding to this relatively under-researched field of study. Willers analyzes the inter-connections between anti-smuggling policies and border enforcement through the specific experiences of refugees and migrants, and their intersectional inequalities, in Mexico. Saurombe and Zinatsa examine skilled migration within the continent of Africa and, in doing so, contribute to the literature on labor market integration from the underexplored standpoint of South-to-South mobilities and, thus, advance the understanding of skilled female migrants within the context of family migrations.

Finally, turning to border crossing into the US, Sanchez writes about Mexicans who grew up in the United States without documents. Her article seeks to enhance our understanding of the impacts of changing government policies on vulnerable people, particularly those whose vulnerability is exacerbated by their trust in the government, their fear of the government, or by their exclusion from government programs.

Conclusion

The articles in this Research Topic highlight the urgency of addressing the following issues and suggest several lines of research for further development.

There is a need for less restrictive and simplified immigration programs in order to ensure the wellbeing and inclusion of migrant communities in several global locations, including the US (see Sanchez) and South Africa (see Saurombe and Zinatsa).

Moreover, there is an urgent need to address the impact of border enforcement and anti-smuggling policies on migrant mobility globally, such as in Mexico (Willers) and the UK. In relation to the UK, our collection of articles highlights the need to re-examine immigration policy from a historical perspective of coloniality, border, and intersectionality (Wemyss) and to reinterpret British migration policy by listening to the migrants' own stories of their migration journeys, including those who have arrived via informal routes (López and Ryan).

Our Research Topic also calls for more attention to be paid to the practices of care and control of migrants in countries of arrival. Kyliushyk and Jastrzebowska highlight the discrepancies between the needs of Ukrainian refugees and the longer-term provision in Poland, while Merlín-Escorza et al. draw attention to shelters in Mexico and the Netherlands as key defined spaces for a growing population in constant mobility.

Finally, we critically interrogate official discourses on migration. Grabowska stresses the need to look closely at the background to the mass arrival of migrants in Poland, in particular the "political functionality" of the migration issue to divert public attention from other problems in the country. Ma calls for a counter-narrative in the

context of Canada's asylum policy toward the displaced Chinese–Vietnamese community against the backdrop of the rise of white nationalism, xenophobia, and racism at all levels.

Taken together, these nine articles present new insights into this Research Topic and also suggest important new directions for future research, policy, and practice agendas.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Societal dangers of migrant crisis narratives with a special focus on Belarussian and Ukrainian borders with Poland

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Society in the 21st century has experienced a variety of crises, from the fiscal crisis and the migration crisis to the pandemic and the inflation crisis. This paper aims to explore societal dangers of migrant crises narratives. This paper forms part of the Horizon 2020 MIMY research projects with an expert stakeholder Delphi study from seven European countries: Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Luxembourg, Sweden and the UK. It takes also into account contextual international and national public opinion surveys. We formulated a number of societal dangers related to the migrant crisis narrative, which are not sharp and exclusive but invite further consideration: (1) *Societal fatigue*, which relates to a rapid change in societal moods, usually from a positive to a negative attitude toward migrants, but above all this danger is connected with an aid burnout in a civil society; (2) *Othering*, which includes normativity, the labeling of migrants, double or multiple standards in the treatment of migrants and refugees from various origins; the societal danger of othering contributes to societal divisions, polarizations, tensions and conflicts based on ethnicity, religion, race and gender; (3) *Political functionality*, whereby migration as a political construct serves as a "whipping boy" for politicians to divert public opinion from recurrent problems; it also involves the creation of piecemeal, reactionary, ad hoc public policies, and the overuse of a protocol of a state of emergency in order to bring about a centralization of political power.

KEYWORDS

migrant crisis narrative, societal danger, Belarussian-Polish border, Ukrainian-Polish border, societal fatigue, othering, political functionality

1. Introduction

The migration crisis is a big topic, and this is a short paper. In our analysis, we attempt to shake a few societal dangers of using the term of "migration crisis narrative" in a society. By identifying the dangers—the list is not complete and open-ended—we wish to draw attention to some areas of public policy and the gaps within them. Society in the twenty-first century has been generally marred by crisis in one form or another (cf. Walby, 2015), from the fiscal crisis, through the migration crisis and the pandemic crisis

to the inflation crisis. The word "crisis" derives from Ancient Greek, where it means a power of distinguishing or separating, decision, choice, election, judgment, dispute. Economists relate the word crisis to a decisive moment for economic transformations. Sociologists relate it to social change. Migration scholars consider all of the above, and ask why human geographical mobility is so easily paired with crises (cf. Bello, 2022a,b).

The term "migration crisis" problematizes migrants to a receiving society. The question, however, is: who or what exactly is in crisis here? The migrants themselves, or the political system or the society to which they migrate? The term alludes to the undesirability of a situation or a process. The "migration crisis" narrative helps keep society at a standstill, bounded, territorially bordered. The narrative around migration crisis engages individuals, groups and institutions. It is important to establish whether crisis is treated as real in a society or as a socially constructed narrative, or whether it is socially constructed by a narrative and therefore becomes real (Walby, 2022). "The analysis of a crisis involves both aspects: it is real and it is socially interpreted, which has effects. The interpretation of a crisis as permitting or requiring a state of emergency to be declared produces a centralization of political power that can have consequences" (Walby, 2022, p. 4). Crises represent moments of uncertainty and confusion in which civil organizations emerge to diagnose what has gone wrong and take action. This involves making sense of a given crisis by reducing its present complexities to identifiable causes and consequences. The literature brings complex problematizations of the crisis (Greussing and Boomgaarden, 2017), and links the migrant crisis with other recent and ongoing crises in Europe—the financial crisis of 2008, the Eurozone crisis and the crisis of security (cf. Falkner, 2016; Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2019), the pandemic crisis of 2020–2021 and the inflation crisis of 2022. It also highlights how the migrant crisis intersects with other crises. Migrant issues and especially immigration and integration policies are perfect lens to observe a production of migrant crisis narratives (cf. Boswell et al., 2011). Migration is also such a social phenomenon to be a vehicle to inspire political mobilization and to create a reference for a political conflict.

Policy narratives have their own dynamic which distinguishes them from other public debates and links them with social claims about values or political interests (Boswell et al., 2011). The credibility of policy narratives depends on sources of knowledge and their reliability as based on either a personal experience, a personal perception, a knowledge from media news or knowledge based on research evidence (Boswell et al., 2011). Narratives are shaped by political approach and their traditions in a society, and are influenced by competing actors to "frame" issues according to their political functionality. In order to have its social power, policy narratives need to be compelling, quite comprehensive and coherent.

Migrant policy narratives are the space to observe the above mentioned aspects (Boswell et al., 2011).

We formulate four guiding research questions of this article: (1) What is a difference between a policy narrative and an individual narrative? At which level of analysis the policy narrative connected to migration is located?; (2) What are the factors stimulating migrant crisis narratives?; (3) What new arguments an expansion of migrant crisis narratives to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) brings, especially to its Belarussian-Polish and Ukrainian-Polish borders? (4) What are societal dangers of overusing and not-using migrant crisis narratives in specific circumstances? The key aim of this article is to explore social factors that stimulate the "migrant crisis" narrative and societal dangers caused by migrant crisis narratives. The paper is divided into five sections: introduction, theory, methodology, findings, and concluding discussion, including some thoughts on implications for social theory and policy.

2. A conceptual approach to the migrant crisis narrative

This section locates our discussion and research at the intersecting point of three bodies of literature: the general sociological meaning of crisis, the migrant crisis through the lens of migration studies, and the societal narrative from the perspective of both general sociology and migration studies. This literature review builds a framework for the analysis of the societal dangers of the migrant crisis narrative.

The concept of a migrant crisis can be understood only within a society. Whether it has a transformative power depends on its structures (cf. Walby, 2022), but also timing and space. The migration crisis fits the definition of crisis offered by Walby (2015) as "an event that has the potential to cause a large detrimental change to the social system and in which there is lack of proportionality between cause and consequence" (Walby, 2015, p. 1). However, there are two aspects that require further discussion. The interpretation of migrant crisis as an event may be correct, but how should we interpret its "ongoing-ness"? After all in Winter 2022, (1) people have been fleeing *via* the Mediterranean Sea since the summer of 2015, and later also through English Channel, and are still doing so; (2) there are still people in forests of Belarus on the Belarussian-Polish border, who have been there since early Autumn 2021; and (3) Ukrainian refugees have been fleeing massively the Russian war since February 2022. The other aspect relates to the fact that human migrants are involved and one cannot talk about a "migrant crisis above our heads". The definition offered by Walby, however, as "an event in a short period of time and a longer period of consequences that cascades in non-linear form" helps make sense of developments related to migrant crises (Walby, 2022, p. 14).

In the field of migration studies, various terms are used for the migrant crisis: the "refugee crisis" (Khiabany, 2016, p. 755), the "migrant crisis", the "refugee and migrant crisis" (Karolewski and Benedikter, 2017, p. 294) (cf. Kushnir et al., 2020). The term "migration crisis" is not new or isolated in the literature as a phenomenon or assigned to a particular event (cf. Weiner, 1995). "It is rather one among a series of scattered inflamed reactions to recurrent massive movements of people. (...) global migration crises [are] socially constructed scattered inflamed reactions that have been happening since the end of Cold War, as a consequence of forced movements of people that a variety of conflicts and instabilities have produced across the planet" (Bello, 2022a,b, p. 1327). As Kushnir et al. (2020) discuss, mixed migration flows and types of migration become conflated and misinterpreted, which exacerbates the migration crisis narrative. We understand in this article the "migrant crisis" as being located at the intersection of various "crises".

Crawley (2016) analyses the policy response to migration crisis, mostly that of 2015, and states that it does not reflect the numbers but differences between states, the EU and other parts in relation to their perception of migration. He means the unwillingness and inability of politicians and policymakers to use extensive evidence on migration dynamics and to apply political and economic resources to address the consequences of conflicts and economic underdevelopment in migrants' areas of origin (Crawley, 2016, p. 14).

Societal narratives tell us about societies, their past and their imagined future. Societal narratives are usually located at meso levels—between local narratives produced by individuals and organizations, national/policy narratives produced by ruling governments, and the global metanarratives (Lyotard, 1979) produced by international organizations and global media. Societal narratives reflect and affect the properties of the societies where they emerge (cf. Corvellec and Hultman, 2012). In order to understand the meso level of narratives, more deliberation is needed in this article.

As Bello says (2022b, p. 1445–1446), narratives can be openly rejected by some, but they do not need to be accepted by the others to have an effect. The difference between an act of speech and a narrative is that first the audience needs to accept a message formulated by the sender (e.g., the government in power) then it is a spill-over into a narrative. From a postmodern perspective, the narratives represent "true knowledge" that cannot be challenged by the audience (Lyotard, 1979), but needs to be "resisted" with alternative narratives often offered by civil society.

Boswell (2011) and Boswell et al. (2011) talk about policy narratives and embed both crises and their narrative(s) connected to migration into a migration policy-making. Migration issues compete with other policy narratives and somehow often, especially when radical but systematically and coherently repeated and connected with other policy areas are appealing to an audience. "Many aspects of migration control can be characterized as areas of risk, with policy-makers forced to make decisions with potentially beneficial or harmful consequences under conditions of great uncertainty" (Boswell et al., 2011, p. 3). Policy narratives can spread across sectors, regions and even countries.

For the purpose of this article, we therefore define the migrant crisis narrative as a narrative located in-between the level of policy-makers (cf. Boswell et al., 2011), associated here with a ruling government and the local level of individuals and organizations acting systematically on the ground and self-reporting their work, primarily through social media, and thereby usually offering an alternative, bottom-up narrative in reaction to the top-down narrative spread by right-wing politicians, who in some countries are the ruling governments. It is therefore worth considering the extent to which these crisis narratives are top-down—e.g., from the government and policy makers, the media etc.—or rather bottom-up, i.e., emanating from the populace?

3. Methodology

To address the societal dangers of migrant crisis narratives requires both theoretical thought and some degree of empirical exploration. The data informing this article was collected through the Delphi stakeholder study's results conducted in the international Horizon 2020 MIMY international research project[1] in two waves addressing issues of migration and integration policies, decisions, distribution of power and implementations, as well as through the review of both international and national public opinion survey results and societal sentiment analyses on social media, mostly Twitter. We need to make a disclaimer here that we did not study, however, in this article the impact of traditional media and social media on migrant crisis narratives which might be a separate topic for a new article. An earlier evidence shows, however, a complementary not competing effects between the two: more general and neutral picture of refugees was presented by traditional media and more individualized, empathic picture of refugees was presented by social media (cf. Nerghes and Lee, 2019). There is a lack of findings however about the role of public media turned into propaganda media like in Poland and Hungary for instance and their role in producing migrant and refugee pictures leading to crisis narratives as juxtaposed to social media in these countries.

For our primary data collection we used an international longitudinal stakeholder survey developed in H2020 MIMY research project. Our stakeholder survey was conducted in a mode of a Delphi Study. A Delphi study is literally a virtual panel of stakeholders who come virtually together

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1 https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870700

without knowing their identities to arrive at a collective answer to a challenging question. Thus, a Delphi study could be considered a type of virtual meeting or as a collective consensus-seeking approach (cf. Linstone and Turoff, 1975). The Delphi survey is a tool designed to systematically collect information from a group of stakeholders in a way that decreases individual bias and reduces uncertainty about the future (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963). We used a mixed-method approach in one, combined research tool of a Delphi Study (cf. Linstone and Turoff, 1975). It was combined of standardized survey questions with numerical scales capturing the earlier findings of the H2020 MIMY research project and open qualitative questions where answers can be hand-written.

People observing and analyzing migrant integration over years, designing migration policies or directly working with migrants can provide valuable intuition and knowledge about integration patterns. Stakeholders—especially when consulted in groups—can help resolve conflicting knowledge and enhance awareness about uncertainties, which ideally leads to a situation in which groups perform better than its single best member (Rowe et al., 1991).

We received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Kozminski University in Warsaw who was responsible for this task in the international consortium of H2020 MIMY to coordinate and conduct the international survey with stakeholders of migration and integration issues from partner countries who operate both locally and nationally which helped us gather diverse points of view. The sample was purposive and based on previous contacts and participation of these stakeholders in the international H2020 MIMY, assembled in a so called MIMY Stakeholder Platform. The platform was built earlier than the survey was launched and aimed to create a sense of connection to the project throughout its duration, for stakeholders so that they become collaborators in the process. The stakeholder platform embedded into local and national contexts of partner countries provided the contacts for engagement at the local and national levels within our stakeholder study. Every consortium partner was responsible for recruiting and maintaining contacts with stakeholders from their country. It explained to actors being recruited into the platform to engage in the whole research project.

Our Delphi Study is distinct in four ways: (1) it involved stakeholders already active in the project on other occasions at Stakeholder Platform; (2) research tools (questionnaires) were consulted with migrant organizations, including youth migrant organizations; (3) it involved both policy makers, policy users and observers.

We collected data from stakeholders-participants from seven European countries in two waves of the study: Italy, Luxemburg, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the UK. Altogether,

the first stage of the study involved 114 stakeholders[2]; the second stage, in which we also received qualitative answers, involved longitudinally 45 stakeholders. The first wave was conducted anonymously from December 2021 to March 2022 and the second wave was also conducted anonymously from June to September 2022. In the second wave we showed the results to our stakeholders from the first wave so they could anonymously experience the opinions of the others and participate in a learning process. The study was conducted with the help of internet survey (*Computer Assisted Web Interview*, CAWI) with some open questions. Both questionnaires were coded in JotForm in six languages and the data was gathered in one excel database. This made it possible to send the online survey questionnaire links to the stakeholders in their chosen language of communication. Each country partner in the consortium of H2020 MIMY research project was responsible for the management and maintenance of the contact with stakeholders in their country. In general, project partners involved stakeholders defining themselves (multiple answers) as advocacy ($n = 40$); policy users ($n = 29$); migrant organizations, including young migrant organizations ($n = 25$); lobbying ($n = 18$); both policy maker and policy user ($n = 17$) and policy maker only ($n = 9$). Some of survey participants perform multiple roles. A *policy maker* was defined as a person who is responsible for policy strategy, framework, and a design of instruments. A *policy user* was defined as a person who is responsible for putting the policy into practice (e.g., street worker; counselor; social workers; family assistant; career advisor; and migrant club animator), and applies it into a practical context. *Instruments* linked to migrants are understood here as practices, tools which can be used to overcome challenges and to achieve aims.

The majority of the stakeholders who took part in this study were women ($n = 72$). Thirty-five men took part in this two-wave survey and seven people stated that they did not want to share their gender. We also asked about the migration backgrounds of the stakeholders themselves, considering that they work for and with migrants; 23 people among our stakeholders stated that they have a migration background, 83 said no migration background and 6 did not want to share. The average age of our respondents was around 40. This study by the H2020 MIMY research project aimed to, in a dialogue and in one longitudinal study, juxtapose various perspectives from policy makers and policy users, especially between makers at the national level and users at the local level in order to work out issues for migration/integration policies.

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2   Germany ($n = 12$); Italy ($n = 17$); Luxembourg ($n = 8$); Poland ($n = 17$); Romania ($n = 17$); Sweden ($n = 17$); UK ($n = 15$); Others (EU, Hungary, no data) ($n = 11$).

4. Societal dangers of migrant crisis narrative and its factors

Before we attempt to understand the societal dangers of the migrant crisis narrative, it is important to explore the factors that stimulate and facilitate the migrant crisis narrative in the literature as well as in the findings of the stakeholder study of H2020 MIMY research project.

A multitude of factors shape the migration crisis narrative. Among the factors stimulating the migrant crisis narrative is the so-called "new order of social uncertainties" as elaborated by Appadurai (2006). This new order is characterized by: (1) uncertainties about stability, existence, state goods and their redistribution; (2) a loose or non-existent connection with Weberian predictable bureaucratic and legalized procedures: (3) problems with predictions—unexpected occurrences with global impact (e.g., pandemics and war); (4) a lack of security of health and sanitation (especially during COVID-19 pandemics); and (5) a lack of affordable housing for the under-waged, young, lower middle class. These new forms of uncertainty create intolerable anxiety and uncertainty (Appadurai, 2006). Especially when such uncertainty is allied with other social forces, such as the growing disregard for inequalities, the disregard of citizen protests by the state, and *ad hoc*, piecemeal actions accelerated by a crisis narrative. Harris (2021) also points out a number of factors which may stimulate and therefore facilitate a migrant crisis narrative, which are in line with Appadurai (2006): (1) growing economic inequalities exacerbated by pandemics; (2) polarized political climate: the tightening of borders, restrictive policies, visa complexity; and (3) uncertainties about stability, existence and state goods and their redistribution.

In our international stakeholder study under H2020 MIMY research project, we asked our respondents about the extent to which they agree that the following factors (from a prescribed list developed on the basis of earlier findings of the project) might constrain policy regarding migrants and their prospective integration. A lack of political will was chosen by all stakeholders from the studied countries, especially Swedish stakeholders (mean 4.65/5.00) and Polish stakeholders (4.53/5.00). Italian, Romanian and British stakeholders also strongly confirmed this (all 4.47/5.00), with respondents from Luxembourg (4.38/5.00) and Germany (4.33/5.00) the least emphatic. Lack of knowledge as a factor constraining migration and integration policy was mostly chosen by Luxembourgian (mean 4.50/5.00) stakeholders and German stakeholders (also 4.50/5.00), less so but still to a great extent by Swedish (4.41/5.00) and Romanian stakeholders (also 4.41/5.00), followed by the Italian (4.35/5.00) and British stakeholders (4.33/5.00) and finally the Polish stakeholders (4.24/5.00), though even this lowest score is still high.

When we asked our stakeholders about the factors impacting the shape of a policy concerning migrants (also from a prescribed list), they mostly chose: (1) populist government in

power (mean 4.55/5.00); (2) the influence of all kinds of media, including social media (mean 4.13/5.00); (3) the financial crisis (4.00/5.00); (4) the funding of NGOs and limited or lack of funding (3.95/5.00); (5) economic slowdown (3.90/5.00); (6) the situation in countries of origin (3.70/5.00); and (6) the pandemic (3.45/5.00).

The following section presents the second stage of our analysis, in which we formulate a number of societal dangers of the overuse or, conversely, the purposeful non-use of the term "migration crisis" in the public space: (1) societal fatigue; (2) othering; and (3) political functionality. These dangers can operate as inhibitors because they can reduce or suppress the actions of actors in the society. The three societal dangers presented below are not mutually exclusive by any means. They relate to each other and sometimes overlap.

4.1. Danger 1. Societal fatigue

The repeated use of the term "migrant crisis" over a period of time brings internalization of social fatigue in a society. Social fatigue means that members of a society run out of energy to spend on incoming forced, war migrants[3]. Social fatigue caused by the "migrant crisis" narrative leaves society overstimulated, stressed, tired, anxious, negative, and under pressure in given social settings. Social fatigue also results in indifference to social problems.

Baláž et al. (2021, p. 5) found that population-related factors such as stock of foreign-born population and a sudden increase in migration flows, types of settlement and sociodemographic variables impact significantly on long-term attitudes toward immigrants (2020, p. 11). According to BaláŽ et al., the 2015 migration crisis has a stronger impact on feelings toward immigrants than terrorist attacks. This effect is especially strong in post-communist countries. The radical increases in "very negative" statements correspond with the large number of early arrivals of migrants and refugees *via* the Balkan route. Very negative attitudes toward migrants from outside the EU have been growing substantially in post-communist countries since November 2015, usually along the line of the narratives of national governments. The percentage of "very negative" feelings slightly decrease over time but stay high in some EU countries at the end of 2018. Countries located on the Balkan route such as Greece, Romania and Bulgaria had high numbers of transit and, or staying migrants, but expose lower level of "very negative" attitudes toward non-EU immigrants compared with

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3 Rather than a general term we need to differentiate between visible (undesired) and invisible (desired) migrants—see Mulholland and Ryan (2022) on how migrants may experience different levels of visibility and invisibility and how that can change, which can have unsettling consequences.

post-communist countries outside the Balkan route such as Czechia, Slovakia, Latvia and Estonia (Baláž et al., 2021, p. 12).

Krzyżanowski (2018), Krzyżanowska and Krzyżanowski (2018), and Żuk and Żuk (2018b) showed that the societies of Central and Eastern European countries presented a more racist attitude during the "2015 crisis" than Western European societies. Why? There is not a straightforward explanation. There might be still a cultural and political gap that divides the European Continent—a Berlin Wall remaining in people's heads. But is it that simple? Already in 2009 The Pew Global Attitudes Survey looked at differences between Eastern and Western societies of Europe. It found that Central and Eastern Europeans were less accepting that "a good thing for any society to be made up of people from different races, religions and cultures". Thirty percent of Hungarians and 22 percent of Poles did not favor that diversity was a good thing, compared with one in 10 of the French and 13 percent of British and Germans. When asked about specific ethnic groups, the picture blurred. In Central and Eastern Europe, anti-Semitism was still prevalent known as a prejudice without factual presence of Jews, while in Western Europe people show negativity to Muslims. The Pew survey found that nearly 30 percent of Poles and Hungarians had negative attitudes to Jews while nearly 30 percent of British and nearly 70 percent of Italians had a negative view of Muslims, while 30 percent of Germans did not like Turks. Western Europeans may potentially look more tolerant when talking in the abstract, political correctness's terms, but are also somehow intolerant with attitudes addressing a specific ethnic group. (cf. Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2009).

Coletto et al. (2017) analyzed sentiments toward the refugee crisis in 2015 using Big Data from Twitter. They collected tweets posted in English from mid-August to mid-September 2015. Their dataset comprised ∼1.2 million tweets from 47,824 users, excluding bots. They classified each user on a binary basis, i.e., as having either positive or negative sentiments toward the refugee crisis. The study revealed that at the beginning Europeans mostly expressed positive sentiments toward the refugees.

Righi et al. (2021) collected around 2,400 Italian-language[4] tweets per day in the period of January 2015 to October 2018 and classified their mood using unsupervised sentiment analysis to derive an index of migration mood (DIV) based on the ratio between the number of positive tweets to the sum of positive and negative tweets. Their analysis shows that the mood toward migration seemed to move from initially positive to negative during the summer 2016 crisis, when the arrivals of migrants consistently increased, with the negative sentiment deepening after March 2018 (cf. Bosco et al., 2022). Negative attitudes, especially as a reversal of previously positive attitudes, can be also a proxy of a societal fatigue.

The other example concerns the hostile narrative of the Polish government relating to the situation on the Belarussian-Polish border in Autumn 2021 as regards the inflow of migrants and refugees from the Middle East facilitated by Lukashenka's regime which was reflected in the public opinion surveys and also by the manner in which survey questions were formulated. For instance, the survey conducted by SW Research for the Polish center-right daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* on November 9th−10th, 2021 asked respondents whether, in their opinion, the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border threatened the security of Poland. Nearly 70 percent answered "yes", 15 percent said "no" and 15 percent had "no opinion". Later the same month, another survey was conducted by the same company and it was directly commented as "the crisis" on the Polish-Belarussian borderland in the reference to the State of Emergency introduced by the Polish government as a way to exhibit a centralization of the political power (cf. Walby, 2022). At this point, 63 percent respondents thought that the situation on the border was a threat to the security of Poland and nearly 68 percent said that it was a threat to the entire European continent. However, half of the respondents (mostly with political affiliation to opposition, from big cities and higher educated) noticed that the situation on the border was predominantly a threat to the refugees themselves, especially when civil society—activists, NGOs and locals—took action by introducing testimonies from flesh-and-blood to the "migrant crisis" discourse. Slightly more than a third of the respondents thought that time that the situation on the border was a threat to them personally and to their families. Nearly 10 percent of respondents declared that the situation impacted neither the refugees on the border nor they and theirs. While the Polish state was hostile and aggressive, repelling migrants and refugees back to the forests of Belarus, civil society stood up with targeted aid in the borderlands. In January 2022, for the first time, a survey conducted by the non-profit organization OKO.press[5] saw more than 70 percent of respondents acknowledge the saving of migrants in the Polish forests as something good, even though half a year earlier, half of all respondents had been in favor of push-backs. This shows the power of the governmental crisis narrative interpreting the situation on the border. It is in line with Walby (2022) reflection that civil organizations are able to reduce the complexity of a societal crisis by clearly demonstrating its causes (war in Syria and armed conflicts in neighboring countries) and consequences (individual human tragedies). When the topic dropped out of the news and only activists helping on the border were still visible and did not give up, the societal attitudes changed evoking humanitarian sentiments. However, the cost was a deep fatigue, even burn-outs on the part of the activists and NGOs providing aid on the

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4 This is important due to the fact that the majority of migrants in 2015-16 entered the EU *via* the sea border of Italy.

5 https://oko.press/uchodzcy-gorszego-sortu/ IPSOS survey for More in Common, telephone survey (CATI) on 4−7 May 2022, sample of 1,000 people, representative of adult Poles.

Belarussian-Polish border. This shows the resistance and how the dominant narratives can be moved somehow. Up to the above point the dominant anti-migrant narrative had seemed unassailable, but as the results of OKO.press's survey in the example discussed here show, such narratives can be questioned and eventually changed by specific actors (cf. Bello, 2022a,b).

The societal dangers can be seen, especially when comparing the reactions of Poles to various refugee crises. The answers to the survey questions discussed further on in this paper show that the acceptance of refugees by Poles is not unconditional, being less the result of a commonly shared idea of helping, but more of the political and cultural narratives about specific crises, which can change quickly according to political interests and needs (cf. IPSOS for More in Common[6]).

With the welcoming and supportive narrative of the Polish government since the escalation of the Russian aggression toward Ukraine started on February 24th 2022, support for Ukraine, its actions and the Ukrainian migrants fleeing to Poland has been high from the onset of this stage of the war. Shortly after the start of the Russian aggression, the Ukrainians fleeing the war received an enthusiastic and empathetic grassroots reception by the Poles. In the March 2022 Ipsos poll for OKO.press, as much as 61 percent of respondents declared that they had taken part in aid actions in some form. Also, the attitude toward Ukrainians staying in Poland at that time was de facto predominately positive by 92 percent respondents[7]. According to the Eurobarometer survey conducted in April 2022[8], Poland scored highest in the entire EU's in terms of sympathy and solidarity toward Ukraine and refugees from Ukraine. As much as 88 percent of Polish women and men expressed their approval for the reaction of Polish society (formulated in the survey question as "citizens in our country") to the war and its consequences—this was during a time when the approval rating of Poland's national authorities was 58 percent (Flash Eurobarometer, 2022)[9].

In September 2022 in the survey by Ipsos for OKO.press, 6 months after the Russian extended invasion of Ukraine, the support for Ukraine in Poland is still substantial but more mixed than in the past months. In Poland, respondents' commitment to support Ukrainian families has fallen from 61 percent in March 2022 to 40 percent in September 2022[10]. Only 40 percent

of respondents indicated that they were personally involved in aid provision (as compared to 61 percent in March 2022), and 32 percent had someone in the family who continues to help refugees (as compared to 49 percent in March 2022). Most respondents-—41 percent—had a close friend or acquaintance who supported Ukrainian refugees (as compared to 45 percent in March 2022). This shows an alarming emergence of the societal fatigue syndrome, and it is important for the state to step in with organized and structural aid—all the more so because after 120 days of the war in Ukraine, the Polish government stopped supporting people who provide shelter to refugees. The payment of the benefit of PLN 40 per person per day is now extended only in exceptional circumstances, e.g., in the case of people with disabilities and children up to the age of 12 months. This shows how even for white, European refugees, aid cannot be taken for granted, and also governments may change their minds and withdraw support. This complicates the view that Ukrainians receive unconditional support because they are white—the issue is clearly much more complicated than that[11].

4.2. Danger 2. Othering

The second danger of migrant-related policy narratives, especially those relating to the migrant crisis, consists not only of the *othering* and *labeling* of migrants, but also in the application of double standards in relation to migrants of various origins. According to Appadurai (2006), *othering* seeks to enhance the process of "we-making", which is by definition short-sighted and limited. It is a by-product of the process of "theys-creating". Through othering, people build up "predatory identities" (Appadurai, 2006) which social construction and mobilization require othering and therefore helps to build "we-ness". It also helps establish "our" entitlement to rights. Othering creates a deservingness to be part of a society, or even a nation. It is also about targeted, ill-fated stranger and stigmatized stranger (cf. Goffman, 1968). Othering is exclusionary in nature and creates "insignificant others" (as compared to significant others), and as such helps to contextualize migrants as existing beyond society and to dis-embed migrants from a society. By virtue of othering, migrants are made unintegratable. Othering highlights the modern binaries that are exacerbated by nativist discourses: migrant vs. native, we/us vs. they/them, good migrants vs. bad migrants.

Othering can therefore also be a function of a lack of readiness to offer mutual regard and non-antagonistic coexistence (Collier, 2013) and above all a function of a policy panic (Collier, 2013) where the narrative of othering toward migrants helps to divert the attention of various social groups

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6   https://oko.press/uchodzcy-gorszego-sortu/ IPSOS survey for More in Common, telephone survey (CATI) on 4−7 May 2022, sample of 1,000 people, representative of adult Poles.

7   https://oko.press/uchodzcy-gorszego-sortu/

8   https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/ eurobarometer-europeans-approve-eus-response-war-ukraine_en

9   Survey conducted by Ipsos European Public Affairs at the request of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication between 13-20 April across EU Member States.

10   https://oko.press/fala-pomocy-ukrainskim-uchodzcom-opada- dowodzi-sondaz-oko-press-wladza-pis-zawiodla/

11   See: Polish Act of March 12, 2022 on helping Ukrainian citizens in connection with an armed conflict in the territory of that country (In Polish: USTAWA z dnia 12 marca 2022 r.o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa).

from recurrent problems. This approaches the territory of a third societal danger, political functionality, which we discuss further on in this article.

The concept of proximization is very compatible with the societal danger of othering due to migrant crisis narratives. Proximization involves the presentation of physically and temporally distant entities, actors or events as "them;" "they" are portrayed as gradual invaders of "our" space, or to put it differently, "they" are conquering "us" (Cap, 2008, 2015, 2017, 2018). Three types of proximization can be distinguished: (1) spatial—"them" as conquering "our" terrain; (2) temporal— deliberately construing an episode as historical momentum which requires immediate preventive and effective measures, such as declaration of a state of emergency; and (3) axiological— portraying "them" as aliens (Cap, 2015).

For instance, the situation of othering and like-us-making is especially visible in Poland, as evidenced by the results of the previously mentioned public opinion poll carried out by Ipsos for More in Common (May 2022)[12]. In response to the question "do migrants and refugees trying to reach Poland *via* the border with Belarus deserve the same assistance as refugees from Ukraine?", 35 percent said "definitely not", 25 percent "mostly not", 21 percent "mostly yes", and 14 percent "definitely yes". As interpreted by the non-profit media organization OKO.press, this poll demonstrated the sensitivity of the issue of assistance to refugees and migrants in Poland to political interpretations. The fate of a person seeking help was less important than where they came from; the question of why they were seeking aid in Poland was more important than whether they were indeed in need of aid. In this case, the fact that refugees and migrants were being used by the regime of the Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenka to destabilize the situation on the Eastern border of Poland was evidently considered as more important than

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12   https://oko.press/uchodzcy-gorszego-sortu/

the tragedies of individual people seeking help from the Polish population (Tomczak, 2022).

In the second round of our expert-stakeholder study under H2020 MIMY research project, we asked respondents from seven European countries what they thought about the different treatment of "different migrants", as for instance with Ukrainians now in 2022 and Syrians in 2015, seen in several European countries? The vast majority of the stakeholders replied that all migrants who are war refugees should be treated equally, regardless of their country of origin (see Tables 1, 2).

However, in the open questions, they also added that:

> *Migrants should be treated equally within the migrant group. Refugees should be treated equally within the refugee group.* [anonymous]

> *But different situations might require different measures.* [anonymous]

> *Equal does not mean the same e.g. the number of hours of a language course will be different, the degree of discrimination that should be counteracted with different methods will also be different.* [anonymous]

> *Different treatment only breeds racism between different groups in society.* [anonymous]

> *It is terribly tough to work with non-European people from war-torn areas and see that society embraces other people because of the principle of closeness.* [anonymous]

The stakeholders were also asked whether war refugees should be treated differently depending on their temporary

TABLE 1 Stakeholders on the treatment of various groups of migrants*.

Category	Policy makers and advisory (n = 10)	Policy users and advocacy (n = 14)	Both policy makers and users (n = 13)	Observers (n = 8)	Total
All migrants who are war refugees should be treated equally, regardless of their country of origin	9	14	12	8	43
War refugees should have access to different set of rights/be subject to a different set of integration policies depending on their geographical distance/closeness to the host country	0	1	1	1	3
War refugees should have a different set of rights, benefits and obligations depending on their cultural proximity to the receiving host country.	0	0	1	1	2

*Question formulation: What do you think about the different treatment of "different migrants", as for instance with Ukrainians now in 2022 and Syrians in 2015, seen in several European countries?
Source: H2020 MIMY.

TABLE 2 Stakeholders about Ukrainian refugees and other groups of migrant and their temporary status*.

Category	Policy makers and advisory (n = 10)	Policy users and advocacy (n = 14)	Both policy makers and users (n = 13)	Observers (n = 8)	Total
Yes	2	2	2	0	6
No	7	12	9	7	35
No opinion	1	0	1	1	3

*Question formulation: Should war refugees be treated differently depending on their temporary status (the length of time they are going to be in the country)?
Source: H2020 MIMY.

status, such as the length of time they are going to be in the country. The vast majority of stakeholders said no.

In their qualitative replies, the stakeholders also provided the following comments:

> *The problem is due to the existence of two different legal frameworks: temporary protection status or status of applicant for international protection.* [anonymous]

> *How can we request integration when we grant temporary residence permits? We are only putting people in a very stressful and uncertain situation and that creates neither conditions nor trust and makes it impossible for people to create a life for themselves in the new country.* [anonymous]

The stakeholders of the H2020 MIMY research project were also asked about structural and relational barriers on the side of both migrants and local populations constraining integration as a reciprocal process including both the migrants and the local population. For this purpose they were presented with a prescribed list of relational barriers developed on the basis of earlier findings from H2020 MIMY research project. Of these, the stakeholders most frequently chose the following relational barriers with regard to migrants: (1) language acquisition (39/45); (2) meaningful contact with members of the receiving society and support (36/45); and (3) local social networks (34/45) and intercultural support and diversity (34/45). The top three relational barriers on the side of local population were (1) intercultural exchange/diversity (36/45); (2) mutual knowledge (34/45); and (3) respect (32/45). In the top three structural barriers to integration on the side of migrants, they indicated: (1) lack of access to resources—jobs, education, housing services (36/45); (2) lack of suitable accommodation—for asylum seekers, lack of privacy in reception centers (32/45); and (3) trauma as a result of experiences in refugee camps, the passage, and/or conflict in the country of origin (30/45) and xenophobia, racism, discrimination and hostility (30/45). In the top three structural barriers on the side of local population they indicated: (1) intercultural exchange/ diversity (36/45); (2) mutual knowledge (34/45); and (3) respect (32/45). Especially the last point on respect is in line with the deliberations of Appadurai (2006) and Collier (2013).

4.3. Danger 3. Functionality for political reasons

The third danger of the migrant crisis narrative relates to its functionality for political purposes. Right-wing politicians use migration as a substitutive argument—they consider themselves empowered to categorize migrants as good and bad—which ties in with the previously discussed danger of othering—and use these categories as suits their political convenience, situation, public opinion and electoral support. Migration thus functions as a "whipping boy" for politicians, one that can be blamed for other, often completely unrelated, issues. The political functionality of the migrant crisis narrative often involves highly politicized settings where expert knowledge is contested by "common knowledge" (Lievrouw, 2011) or "laymen's knowledge" (Fischer, 2000), and "fact free politics" are practiced due to the growing activation of the populist sections of society (cf. Scholten and van Nispen, 2015, p. 8).

By overusing migrant crisis narratives in the public sphere, right-wing and populist politicians seek to divert attention from other recurrent social problems, such as access to health systems and the quality of health services, housing problems, taxes and energy costs. Migrant crisis narratives as used by right-wing and populist parties are underpinned by agonistic politics of coexistence, which creates civil distance, tensions, exclusions and conflicts. Politics—and, therefore, policies relating to "migrant crises" is often *ad hoc*, piecemeal, and reactive rather than visionary.

The manner in which right-wing politicians refrain from using migrant crisis narratives also clearly illustrates its functionality. For instance in Scandinavian countries, as showed by Näre et al. (2022), in contrast to the reception of refugees from Middle East, the Ukrainian refugee flow has not been labeled as a "refugee crisis" even though in many receiving countries the number of Ukrainian newcomers exceeded the number of refugees who arrived in 2015–2016. Even right-wing populist parties welcomed Ukrainians in the Nordic countries. For instance, Sweden Democrats have stated that Ukrainians must be helped on a temporary basis and that they should not integrate in Sweden. According to the Finns Party, those fleeing from Ukraine deserve protection, help and assistance

because they are Europeans, Christians, and mostly women and children. The image of young men being the main "faces" of the "crisis" in 2015–2016 was reproduced in the media but was not enough scrutinized in public statistics (after Näre et al., 2022), and this image is functionally and manipulatively used by right and far-right politicians.

Another example of the functionality of migrant crisis narratives for political purposes relates to the Polish right-wing coalition government, who used the situation on the Belarussian-Polish border in Autumn 2021 to legitimize its nationalistic policy of a mono-ethnic, Catholic Poland and to cement its own electorate—according to a public opinion survey conducted by Kantar for the center-left daily newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza in November 17–18, 2021, 70 percent of supporters of the ruling Law and Justice party (predominantly men with low education) favored the hostile policy of denying access to the Polish territory for Middle Eastern refugees and migrants and repelling them to the Belarusian territory. In general, 54 percent of respondents supported the actions of the Polish government on the Belarussian border in autumn 2021. The same percentage of respondents also positively rated the idea of building a wall on the border. With regard to the question "do you agree with the following statement: refugees staying on the Polish-Belarusian border must be admitted and allowed to stay in Poland", 26 percent of the respondents were in favor, and 69 percent against.

As documented by OKO.press, Polish activists noticed how politically functional the migration crisis can be:

> "(…) The same politicians who have condemned dozens of other people [Syrian, Eritrean and other Middle Easterners] to starve in the icy forest boast their solidarity with [Ukrainian] refugees. The reserves of great organizations and social empathy have unlocked now, though the humanitarian crisis has lasted since August [2021]. All this enormous help—warm homes and clothes, medical care or universal compassion—were not found by people of a different skin color, fleeing less European wars". (Tomczak, 2022).
> (…) This "manually controlled" asylum policy was very well seen in Afghanistan. The refugees who arrived by plane (and let us remember that the state evacuation was a result of pressure; at first, Afghans were offered humanitarian visas from New Delhi), now find housing and work. But the Afghans, who were freezing and starving in Usnarz, were no longer appealing to the authorities. Although we know that there were people cooperating with Western troops among them. (Tomczak, 2022) [cf. Lopez and Ryan (accepted)].

It is interesting that from the onset of the Russian on-going invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Polish government has not directly used a migration crisis narrative when addressing the Ukrainian refugees, while it was the common

slogan used with regard to the situation on the Belarussian-Polish border in Autumn 2021; politicians actively commented on the "migration crisis situation" in that region across all media. In 2022 the crisis narrative linked to migration has started appearing, not only in the Polish political space but also the European, when interplayed with inflation crisis and energy crisis. The functionality of the crisis narrative is proportionally equal to the political needs and election calendar, and sometimes a "migration" adjective is instrumentally added to it when this promises to be politically beneficial.

Why is the crisis on the border between Poland and Belarus both defined as a "migration crisis" as well as a "security threat"? It is worth referring here to Bauman's social production of "worse" among "others"? This needs a distinction of criteria that differentiate people. Bauman frames racism as a tool for social engineering (Bauman, 1989). What causes migrants from the Ukrainian border to be allowed accessing Poland, and those from the Belarusian border to be pushed back? Both strategies are inscribed into a policy migrant narrative functionally used by the right-wing ruling government in Poland. It is worth reminding here that nationalist and anti-immigrant attitudes in Poland were presented by people from the lower social classes and the "2015 migration crisis" was among the factors that encouraged them to take part in the 2015 elections. (cf. Ost, 2018; Żuk and Żuk, 2018a).

5. Concluding implications for theory and policy

The "migration crisis" narrative has reached a high level of popularity in many European countries. As Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010) show, the perception of a "crisis" was one of the key drivers behind the backlash against multiculturalism across Europe. In various countries, such as the Netherlands, France and the UK, the narrative of a "migration crisis" became linked to rising Euroscepticism connected with the narrative of a lack of national sovereignty. The integration policies of various European countries were also blamed for the crisis.

"A crisis may be contained or it may cascade through the social system; the cascade can be short-lived and minor, or it can be of long duration and major effect. The crisis may be contained (recuperation), have minor effects (intensification), have major effects (transformation) or be total (catastrophe). The outcome depends upon the nature of the social system, on how social systems are connected together and on its level of instability" (Walby, 2022, p. 7). This raises a question how can migration crisis lead to deeper, more lasting social change? If there was a recuperation effect, we would experience *othering* to a very limited extend because all migrants, independent of the type of migration flow, geographical proximity or distance, ethnicity, religion and gender would be embedded into societal inclusion and equality frameworks rather than border, migration and

integration regimes and policies. If there was an intensification effect, all the societal dangers discussed in this article—*societal fatigue*, *othering* and *functionality for political reasons*—would be reinforced and exacerbated, resulting in the "total" crisis that Walby (2022) names a catastrophe. However, societies engage in a great deal of self-balancing activity, aiming for an ideal societal equilibrium—where the state withdraws, a civil society steps in which is, by definition, asymmetric. If the transformation effect took place, migration would be normalized in a society—a new everyday normality would emerge; since migration processes cannot be denied and migrants cannot be just simply thrown away, they are indigenous part of societies. The modern binaries created through othering—such as migrants vs. natives, we/us vs. they/them, good migrants vs. bad migrants—would disappear. We know that these conceptual constructs are Weberian ideal types which can be imputed as based on the findings presented in this article but still remaining ideal societal types.

These ideal types provoke questions, however, about the suitability, sustainability and success of past border, migration and integration policies and the lack thereof. Crises may create a learning opportunity for states and organizations (cf. Kushnir et al., 2020). We do not know what governments have learned from the 2015 crisis, the 2021 Belarus-EU crisis, and the 2022 Ukrainian crisis discussed in this article, but we know that civil society learned a great deal: (1) societal fatigue in a form of a compassion fatigue and aid burnout are real and are caused by the limited involvement of the state; (2) othering is a socially damaging process that causes frustrations, tensions and conflicts; (3) fact-free or fact-silencing or non-fact-scrutinizing politics grows the gap between state and civil society.

Our paper aims to contribute to migration research and sociology in four specific ways. Firstly, we distinguished a policy/government narrative from an individual narrative as discussed by Lopez and Ryan in this Special Issue. The policy narrative exists somewhere between the local, subnational, national and the global levels. The national level is usually constructed by ruling governments, local level is usually constructed by civil society through actions on the ground and the provision of testimonials in the general narrative, while the global level is constructed by international organizations and global traditional and social media. In this article we mostly exploited the space between the national level policy narrative that is functionally created by right-wing and far-right parties and ruling governments, and the local level with the active presence of civil society—NGOs, activists, border area inhabitants and local stakeholders. Through this juxtaposition we identified a gradually growing societal fatigue leading to an aid burnout of civil society, especially when the state withdraws and manipulates migration issues.

Secondly, we identified the factors stimulating migrant crisis narratives. In particular, the *new order of social uncertainties and risks* as initially formulated by Appadurai (2006) played a key role in cataloging these factors. The new order starts with uncertainties and anxieties about stability, existence, state goods and their redistribution. It then proceeds with a partial or complete lack of connection with Weberian predictable bureaucratic and legalized procedures and protocols (e.g., new border crossing protocols, phasing out of migrant integration protocols, and undermining of human rights protocols). This is followed by problems with predictions caused by unexpected occurrences with global impact, such as pandemics and war got identified, followed by lack of security of health and sanitation services. Appadurai also adds a lack of affordable housing for under-waged, young, lower middle class, who are the backbone of a society. We would add to this a new order of uncertainties offered by Appadurai, migration from risks in countries of origin to new risks in Europe which has always been a safe place, a promised land.

Thirdly, we geographically expanded the discussion about migrant crisis narrative (from Western, Southern and Northern Europe) into Central and Eastern Europe. We juxtaposed the situation on the Belarussian-Polish border, where the migrant crisis narrative was purposively overused by right-wing politicians, with the situation on the Ukrainian-Polish border, where the migrant crisis narrative was deliberately not used. Additionally, this paper also discussed voices of resistance as reflected in public opinion surveys and NGOs who can challenge the political narratives (cf. Bello, 2022a,b).

Fourthly, we identified the societal dangers of the overuse and deliberate non-use of migrant crisis narrative, which causes societal fatigue, othering and political functionality, all phenomena that shake societies.

As we said at the beginning of the article, processes of migration are here to stay, and will be serial, not episodic. Migration crisis narratives as social constructs are very effectively used and abused by politicians. It is easier for politicians to talk about "a general migrant problem" than of the system or the condition of a country under their rule. The unintended social consequences of these political practices relate to the critical role of the civil society that is at the core of the matter.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the arguments of this article will be available according to the rules of the Grant Agreement of H2020 MIMY research project and scrutinized by the Research Ethics Committee.

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"What are you doing here?": Narratives of border crossings among diverse Afghans going to the UK at different times

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Through the "hostile environment" migration policy, the UK government has expressed its commitment to do whatever possible to deter and expel unwanted migrants. Faced with the loss of power in the context of globalization, the Conservative administration, elected in 2010, presented itself as a guarantor of citizens' security. The political discourse of "taking back control" of the nation's borders has resulted in increasingly restrictive immigration and asylum policies. In this paper, we present narratives of Afghans who arrived in the UK at different times and through different routes. As well as those evacuated from Kabul airport in 2021, we also interviewed participants who traveled *via* insecure routes over land and sea often taking months, or even years, and involving expensive people smugglers. While the evacuation from Kabul was a very public and highly reported event, often with celebratory tones in the international media as Western governments sought to "rescue" Afghan allies, those Afghans who travel to the UK *via* illegal routes are often stigmatized; demonized in press and political discourses. Building on the emerging body of literature that uses "journey as a narrative device" and drawing upon our novel dataset, we analyze how diverse migrants tell their stories and present agency, within contexts of extreme hazards, to achieve their imagined future. Moreover, applying a spatio-temporal lens we advance understanding of the intersection of place and time in how Afghans traveling to the UK, including recent evacuees, are framed differently with resultant consequences for how border crossings are negotiated and narrated. In so doing, we complicate simplistic categories of deserving vs. undeserving, genuine vs. fraudulent, evacuees vs. irregularised migrants.

KEYWORDS

migration journey, narratives of migration, hostile environment, border crossing, Afghans in the UK

Introduction

The announcement by US President Joe Biden, in April 2021, of withdrawing US troops from Afghanistan triggered a race against time for Western governments to leave ahead of 31st August. The Taliban's rapid advance throughout the country and their national power takeover on 15th August turned Kabul Hamid Karzai International Airport into the epicenter of a precarious international operation that aimed to evacuate those who worked with the government, their families and other vulnerable people on humanitarian flights (UNOCHA, 2022).

Thousands of civilians packed into the area around the airport, waiting for days in appalling conditions, enduring high temperatures without water or food (Latifi, 2021). During these critical days, the Taliban fired shots into the air and tried to disperse people with batons, killing at least 20 people (Sabbagh et al., 2021). A bomb attack by Islamic State took place at the airport on 26th August, killing more than 72 civilians and 13 US personnel (Sullivan, 2021). Desperation

and panic ensued, with apparent fatalities after people were seen clinging to moving US aircraft (Harding and Doherty, 2021). On the 31st August, the Taliban celebrations of the departure of the Western governments with fireworks contrasted with the desolation of the hundreds of civilians still at the airport who had not managed to leave the country (Burns and Baldora, 2021).

The British Army evacuated around 15,000 Afghans. In the UK, the government received these evacuees as part of Operation Warm Welcome, which aimed to save the lives of those who worked with and for the British forces in Afghanistan. By ensuring their safe departure, the government intended to fulfill a moral debt to them and "ensure Afghans arriving in the UK receive the vital support they need to rebuild their lives, find work, pursue education and integrate into their local communities" (Gov.UK, 2021).

The welcoming discourse toward Afghan evacuees contrasted with parallel discourses about Afghans arriving on English coasts *via* irregular routes, e.g. in small boats or the backs of lorries. In 2021, more than 25,700 people crossed the English Channel in small boats—more than triple the 2020 total. Afghans constituted 24% (1,094) of the 4,540 people who arrived on English shores in small boats between January and March 2022, followed by Iranians (16%; 722) and Iraqis (15%; 681) (ITV, 2022). In British policy and media discourses these arrivals are presented on the one hand as a threat to the UK's security and welfare systems and, on the other hand, as victims of human traffickers who charge exorbitant prices and use intimidating tactics.

As noted by Schapendonk et al. (2021), the division of people into particular migrant categories is a "normative artefact" created by migration policies. The fact of crossing borders in different ways, regular vs. irregular, is used as a rationale for different treatment upon arrival in the UK. Hence, through different policies toward Afghans who arrive *via* different routes, the British government has created an artificial distinction between those who are fleeing the same conflict at the same time. Immigration policies that seek to differentiate between different types of migrants arriving *via* different routes "perpetuate and reinforce a simplistic dichotomy" between the "genuine" and the "fraudulent" and between the deserving and the undeserving in accessing the welfare system (Karyotis et al., 2021, p. 483). Indeed, in the UK since the early 2000s, successive governments have "separated asylum seekers and refugees, with the former considered unwanted and treated with suspicion and the latter reluctantly accepted" (Karyotis et al., 484). In this regard, El-Enany (2020) talks about "irregularised" (rather than "irregular") migrants to emphasize the government's efforts to silence and marginalize those arriving *via* irregular routes, which is reminiscent of past colonial times (El-Enany, 2020).

In this article, we engage with recent theories around "migrant journey" (Gough and Gough, 2019; Amrith, 2021; Crawley and Jones, 2021; Schapendonk et al., 2021). Using journey narratives as an interpretative device (Mason, 2004; Kaytaz, 2016), we apply a spatio-temporal lens (Erel and Ryan, 2019) to understand how migrants' journey narratives are situated within particular places and through time. We also consider the role of agency and imagination in shaping past experiences and future selves through migratory experiences. Through this analysis, we develop insights into how our participants, who entered the UK at different times and *via* different routes, recount and make sense of experiences within and between various border crossings. Moreover, drawing on our novel dataset of diverse Afghan participants, including recent evacuees, and public discourse on border crossing our paper advances

understanding of how migrants from the same origin country may be constructed differently within shifting immigration regimes. In so doing, and in keeping with the themes of this Special Issue, our paper contributes toward challenging simplistic discourses about "good"/deserving migrants vs. "bad"/undeserving migrants. In the next section we present the background context with specific focus on UK immigration policies and discourses.

Background context

Much has been written in recent years, especially following the so-called migration crisis of 2015, about how governments have constructed migration as a "threat", provoking a "moral panic" about the risks to security, economies, and the cultural identity of particular nation-states (Mainwaring and Brigden, 2016; Triandafyllidou, 2019; Griffiths and Colin Yeo, 2021; De Jong, 2022).

In order to understand current events, it is necessary to explain, briefly, the political context over more than a decade of UK migration policies. The notion of border as a limiting space becomes relevant in the context of the harsh austerity programme and the privatization of the welfare system initiated by the government after the 2008 financial crisis. Faced with the loss of power on the global stage, the Conservatives, elected to power in 2010, presented themselves as guarantors of citizens' security, promising a rational distribution of the increasingly scarce public resources strictly among those who paid their taxes. This message enhanced hostility toward the vulnerable and marginalized, especially irregularised migrants, as unnecessary expenses for the system (Mayblin, 2019).

Through the "hostile environment" migration policy, devised by then Home Secretary Theresa May in 2012, the Conservative administration expressed its intention to do whatever possible to expel unwanted migrants. Thus, as discussed elsewhere in this Special Issue (see paper by Wemyss, 2023) tracking and control mechanisms at the borders, as well as beyond points of entry, in everyday interactions, were intensified (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019).

In 2015, then Prime Minister David Cameron used emotive language to label the growing number of migrants crossing through the Eurotunnel a "swarm", a term which serves to dehumanize, emphasizing the danger and threat posed by this invading force (Taylor et al., 2015). In 2018, then Home Secretary Sajid Javid questioned whether those arriving *via* irregular routes were "genuine" asylum seekers (Campbell, 2019). Meanwhile, in 2019 Prime Minister Boris Johnson proclaimed: "We will send you back… If you come illegally, you are an illegal migrant" (Quinn, 2019).

It is interesting to note, therefore, that amid severe restrictions on the rights of asylum seekers in the Nationality and Borders Act (2022),[1] the UK government presented the Afghan evacuation plan as a humanitarian operation to save the lives of those who worked with the British Army and government in Afghanistan. The language used by leading politicians was overwhelmingly positive. For example, then Home Secretary Priti Patel said: "We owe a great deal to the brave Afghans who worked alongside us and we want to make sure they have certainty and stability to be able to thrive in the UK" (Gov.UK, 2021). Likewise, then Prime Minister Johnson said: "I am determined that we give them and their families the support they need to rebuild their lives here in the UK" (Gov.UK, 2021). Moreover, the

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1   For more details about this Act see, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/36/contents/enacted.

government guaranteed evacuees' security, immediate and indefinite residence permits, medical care, and school places for children. About half of the new arrivals joined the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) resettlement scheme, which aims to provide stability with unrestricted work permission and the option to apply for British citizenship. Other evacuees joined the ACRS as Afghans vulnerable to human rights violations, such as women and girls, members of ethnic and religious minority groups, and LGBTQ+ people. However, at the same time, the Johnson government continued its policy of hostile environment toward Afghans arriving *via* irregular routes including planned off-shoring to Rwanda. Indeed, it was noteworthy that Afghans were among those on the plane scheduled to take the first group of migrants to Rwanda in summer of 2022 (Culbertson, 2022).

As explained in our Methods section, a unique aspect of our project is the diversity of participants. As well as Afghans who were safely evacuated from Kabul airport, we also interviewed some who arrived *via* irregular routes in 2021, and others who made hazardous journeys in the 1990s, before the advent of mobile technologies, and in 2015, during the so-called "migration crisis". This novel dataset allows us to explore the range and diversity of migrant journeys *via* "irregular routes" including slow, dangerous and protracted experiences over many years, as well as the rapid movement of people through a "regular route" during the highly publicized evacuation process in August 2021. As explained in the next section, we analyse our data using "journey" as a narrative device, to gain insights into how these diverse migrants describe, present and make sense of their experiences of leaving Afghanistan and moving to the UK at different times and through different routes.

Journey as a narrative device

The notion that millions of migrants are "on the move" and heading for European countries has become a vociferous political discourse which simplifies and misrepresents diverse migration flows (Schapendonk et al., 2021). The notion of "transit migration" has been constructed through policy discourses to present linear migratory movements (e.g., Home Office News Team, 2021) whereby migrants set out to target clear, fixed destinations, in Western Europe, and merely pass through in-between or transit countries as part of their pre-planned journeys (Crawley and Jones, 2021).

The reality of migration journeys is far more messy, uneven and uncertain (Gough and Gough, 2019; Belabbas et al., 2022), subject to changing state and socio-economic conditions, as well as migrants' personal dynamics and affective engagements at different points (Amrith, 2021). Migrants often flee dangerous and violent places without a clear plan in mind or plans may change as new routes open up or other routes close down (Koikkalainen and Nykänen, 2019). Journeys may be marked by long periods of immobility, either deliberate or enforced (Sanò and Della Puppa, 2021; Crawley and Kaytaz, 2022). Hence, as argued by Schapendonk et al. (2021), rather than always focusing on movement, it is also important to pay attention to immobility and the ways that migrants mobilize resources and navigate opportunities and obstacles in particular places where they spend extended periods of time.

Indeed, far from being merely "transit" countries, places such as Iran and Turkey, for example, are often destinations in their own right for large numbers of migrants who have no intention of ever traveling to Europe (Kaytaz, 2016; Fischer, 2017). Nonetheless, these countries are also spaces where migrants may experience complex social and economic realities that can lead to further onward migration (Askerov et al., 2018; Belabbas et al., 2022). We are mindful that only interviewing migrants who arrive in Western European countries, such as the UK, may reinforce political narratives that all migrants are moving toward this destination, the so-called politics of invasion (Mainwaring and Brigden, 2016). Nonetheless, as discussed later in the paper, our participants narrate very different migration patterns as some spent many years in other countries before arriving in the UK.

In seeking to understand complex, diverse and uneven migrations, a number of researchers have begun to use the notion of journey as "a narrative device". Using journey as an "analytical tool", Kaytaz notes: "the journey can be conceived as a form of narrative and that this narrative is constituted of long periods of immobility punctuated by shorter instances of travel. Conceptualizing the journey as such helps transcend the traditional, dichotomous view of the journey as having a beginning and end or an origin and final destination" (2016, p. 285). Using "journey" in this way allows researchers to analyse how migrants "construct meaning, subjectively and collectively" (Kaytaz, 2016, p. 287).

Narratives are "interpretative devices through which people represent themselves, both to themselves and to others" (Mason, 2004, p. 165). Narratives perform personal work by spelling out who I am and how I relate to others. Of course, that is not to suggest that a narrative can be understood just as an individual story. As Mason observed in her analysis of mobility stories "a gaze of individualization… loses sight of the connectivity of social relations, identity and agency" (2004, p. 178). She adds that migration narratives "are highly relational" (2004, p. 177). Personal narratives are "grounded in changing webs of relationships" demonstrating "the significance of context, contingency, constraint and opportunity" (Mason, 2004, p. 166).

Thus, it is important to contextualize narrative form, structure, content and meaning in specific spatio-temporal frameworks (Ryan, 2015a, 2023; Erel and Ryan, 2019). One does not construct narratives purely of one's own making, personal stories interact with and are shaped by wider contexts including political and policy discourses circulating in society (Ryan, 2015a). Applying a spatio-temporal lens, focuses attention on how migration is framed by the particularities of specific places and time periods. Migrants move across different places and through time, as well as negotiating a particular place over time. For example, regulations within specific jurisdictions can enable or hinder mobilities (Sanò and Della Puppa, 2021). Moreover, such regulations can shift over time, for instance in response to specific political or economic priorities, which can open or close migration pathways (Sanò and Della Puppa, 2021).

A spatio-temporal lens can be applied across various levels of analysis (Erel and Ryan, 2019). Beyond the macro structural level, we can also focus on the dynamic interplay of individual agency and inter-personal relationality, on the meso level. Hence, we analyse how migrants mobilize resources through social networks in particular places and at specific times to help navigate obstacles and opportunity not just at national border crossings but in encounters with everyday bordering within countries (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Thus, analyzing journeys as a narrative device, through a multi-level spatio-temporal lens, can help us to challenge the often passive or victimized depiction of migrants within public discourses (Schapendonk et al., 2021; Crawley and Kaytaz, 2022).

Furthermore, we argue that a spatio-temporal lens can also be applied to how journey narratives are presented within interview encounters. In other words, how a participant presents their narrative to a researcher is framed by the specificities of that particular spatio-temporal setting. Some participants are relating events that occurred many years earlier and now, in a place of secure status, they reflect back on their journey. In other words, they know how their journey story ended. Other participants are relating recent events from a position of unresolved status and, thus, they do not yet know where and how their story will end. As discussed later in the paper, the spatio-temporal setting of the interview encounter has implications for how journeys have been imagined and re-imagined.

The key role of imagination in how migrants see themselves in a future time, place and social setting has been underlined by Koikkalainen and Nykänen (2019) in research with Iraqi asylum seekers in Finland. In analyzing why so many Iraqis applied for asylum in Finland, a country with which they had no prior link, the researchers highlight the salience of how particular countries are constructed in individual and collective imaginations. However, upon arrival, this imagined destination often failed to live up to expectations and migrants had to begin to "re-imagine" a different future. Similarly, as noted by researchers working with Syrians in Denmark, "the futures they had imagined for themselves are not coming into fruition as they are constantly disrupted" by the bureaucracies of unwelcoming immigration regimes (Gough and Gough, 2019, p. 97). Amrith refers to how social media shapes initial linear imaginaries for migrants, generating "images of "making it" overseas, portraying life abroad as glamorous, and following a straightforward, linear story of adventure and success" (2021, p. 133). Amrith observed that even when there are rumors about difficulties, these do not deter migrants from continuing their plans.

Therefore, in applying the spatio-temporal lens, we are mindful of how stories are told retrospectively, sometimes many years later, and hence how the imagined future may have changed and been re-imagined over time. Moreover, through our novel dataset, we can also see how recently arrived Afghans, including evacuees as well as those who used irregular routes, are in the process of imagining and re-imaging their future selves in an evolving context. In the next section we present a brief summary of our research methods and dataset.

Research methods

This article draws upon a multi-methodological and intersectional study that took place in January–July 2022 and involved 30 newly arrived and long-established Afghan migrants in London. The project received ethical approval from London Metropolitan University research ethics committee.

As a relatively small qualitative study, we make no claims to representativeness, nonetheless, consideration was given to the diversity of the sample in terms of gender, age, family situation and time of arrival. Just over half of our participants (56.7%; $N = 17$) identified as female, and 43.3% ($N = 13$) identified as male. Route and year of arrival in the UK varied greatly among participants, with just over half (53%; $N = 16$) having arrived between 2020 and 2021. All participants have been pseudonymised, with culturally appropriate names, to protect their identities.[2]

All interviews were carried out by the two authors. Interpreters were offered where needed but most interviews were conducted in English either because participants had already lived in London for several years and were comfortable to be interviewed in English or because, though recently arrived, they were highly educated and spoke English confidently.

Interviewing refugees involves specific ethical considerations especially because of the trauma they may have experienced and because of concerns they may have about answering questions relating to their status and route of entry. We are reflective of positionality and power dynamics within the interview encounters (Ryan, 2015b). Access was negotiated through two Afghan associations[3] and the peer researchers, who were all Afghans.[4] All interviewees and focus groups participants were offered a voucher for £20 for their time. Likewise, the four community-based peer researchers received training and were paid vouchers as a recognition of their time on the project. But as noted by Miller (2004) access is not the same as trust. The research project was clearly presented as a collaboration between the university and the Afghan associations. Most interviews took place in the association premises or in hotels where the associations were regularly visiting. Thus, our clear links with Afghan groups probably helped to assuage some potential concerns about our research. Moreover, most of our participants were university graduates or had worked at universities and hence had a good understanding of how university research operated. Nonetheless, we are aware that participants may not have shared all their stories with us (Miller, 2004). However, by focusing on "narratives" we are taking account of these as the versions of their stories that participants felt comfortable sharing with us (Ryan, 2015b). Indeed, as Kaytaz notes, constructing narratives is an essential skill for immigration procedures "particularly for the asylum process" (2016, p. 294). Hence, we are mindful that the narratives of their migration journey that participants shared with us in the interview encounters may be shaped, at least in part, by how they have developed that particular account over time as they navigate immigration and asylum procedures. As Azarian notes, "a story is primarily a justifying narrative" (2017, p. 692) which seeks to explain and rationalize a particular line of action.

All interviews were fully transcribed and anonymised. Both authors, and the research assistant Alessia Dalceggio,[5] undertook initial thematic coding of each individual transcript, based on our original research questions and literature review but also allowing new themes to emerge. We then developed a detailed coding tree and the dataset was entered into the software package NVIVO which is suitable for the analysis of qualitative datasets.

The 30 Afghans who took part in our project had arrived in London at different times and *via* different routes. In this paper, because we wish to explore the journey as a narrative device, we have decided to use a case study approach and present five journey narratives in some detail. Applying a multi-level spatio-temporal lens, our five participants illustrate different journeys, across diverse routes, and at varied points in time, with a range of examples of periods of immobility in particular places. Rabiya fled Afghanistan during the first Taliban regime in the 1990s and spent years in the Netherlands before moving to the UK. Bilal lived for many years in Iran before traveling to the UK in 2015 at the height of the "migration crisis". Both Malala and Abubakar were part of the evacuation from Kabul in August 2021 but illustrate different experiences of that process. Having missed out on evacuation, Sher Shah arrived in the UK *via* irregular routes in 2021.

Migrants stories of using irregular routes

Rabiya

Rabiya was interviewed in person in an Afghan community organization. Her narrative began with her working as a pediatrician in a children's hospital in 1997, when the Taliban came to power. She said: "They entered the hospital with guns". Rabiya stated that it became impossible for her to continue working: "Also, my father worked in the government before Mujahedeen came to power… so I felt more in danger… I was not a politician, but I studied medicine in Russia, and they did not like people who studied in Russia; they called us communists".

Rabiya then described how, in 1997, she fled Afghanistan by car with her young son and husband. She told us about crossing into Uzbekistan and that they stayed in a room for three weeks before traveling to Tashkent by train to avoid passport controls. Throughout her journey narrative, across international borders, Rabiya highlighted active agency in negotiating risks and mobilizing networks at risky situations, thus rejecting the role of victim or dupe (Schapendonk et al., 2021). Although there was a tendency in her narrative to brush over details about any dangers and uncertainties, she did mention that she wore a burka for fear of being arrested: "It was my first time and was my last time to wear a burka. I threw this away [laughing]". Describing how the simple act of wearing a burka seemed to mislead the soldiers at the checkpoints along the road, suggests Rabiya's sense of satisfaction in subverting the very item of clothing so inscribed with symbolism in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

Although it was clear that the long journey over land, involving cars, lorries and a bus relied largely on people smugglers, Rabiya gave us few details but simply said that her husband made all the necessary arrangements. Nonetheless, she did describe the risks they encountered as they endeavored to cross the Polish border: "it rained a lot on the Polish border, and it was flooded; we had to get a plastic boat".

The family was trying to get to the Netherlands, where Rabiya's sister lived. The spatio-temporal context of the narrative is highly significant as it took place in the late 1990s before the widespread use of mobile phones. Unlike recent migrants who rely so heavily on mobile technology (Gough and Gough, 2019), Rabiya did not even have a telephone number for her sister and so was unable to communicate or even notify her that the family were on their way to the Netherlands.

Rabiya did not tell us much about the uncertainties and intermittent waiting along her winding journey through Poland and Germany. While the family clearly relied on traffickers, Rabiya was quite "matter-of-fact" in her account. Here is it important to acknowledge the role of memory as she recounted events that had taken place over 20 years earlier and when the desired outcome of safely reaching the Netherlands had been achieved. Thus, it is possible that she remembered and presented the journey as successful and hence downplayed the risks, fear and costs. Her narrative focused on the positive side of her life in the Netherlands, first in a refugee camp set up in a "big land with a big ground; all green", where there was "a lot of caravans for refugee people" and where the family lived for more than a year. Rabiya focused on the facilities provided in the caravans, which she described as a home-like space. One year after their arrival in the camp, the family obtained their legal status and moved close to where Rabiya's sister lived, where they stayed for 10 years. Rabiya described how neighbors welcomed her family and told us about her efforts to navigate the structural constraints for migrants and her attempts to learn the Dutch language. While she was positive about many aspects of Dutch society, she also described experiences of anti-immigrant hostility from some neighbors.

Although Rabiya and her family spent 10 years in the Netherlands and attained Dutch citizenship, she said that she always dreamed of moving to the UK in search of better opportunities for her children: "If they know good English they can find a job everywhere because it is an international language, while Dutch is just used in 300 km". Hence, in 2007, the couple and their two school age children arrived in London. Again, the spatio-temporal framing of her migrant journey is significant because, at that time, prior to Brexit (Britain's departure from the EU), their Dutch citizenship ensured their EU mobility rights so they crossed the border to the UK without any restrictions.

Rabiya's expectations for her children in the UK show the significant role of imagination in migrants' decision-making on their journey (Koikkalainen and Nykänen, 2019). Nonetheless, while feeling settled in London with her family, Rabiya reflected her disappointment with the UK system for not allowing her to validate her doctor's degree—despite her many volunteering jobs related to healthcare. It is apparent that the lack of recognition of her degree had failed her expectations regarding coming to the UK: "I can't do anything [sigh]… Finding a job is important…" Rabiya clearly felt frustrated by her inability to re-start her medical career in the UK. Nonetheless, she wished to present her journey in a positive light. As noted, a narrative may be a justification story seeking to make sense of a particular set of actions and decisions (Azarian, 2017). Hence, her narrative ended by asserting that "it is more important to be healthy and have my family with me". Like many migrants who experience de-skilling, she emphasized the educational and employment achievement of her children and thus her migration journey could be presented as a success.

Bilal

We interviewed Bilal at an Afghan association. His story began when he was a young shepherd in a village. Tired of poverty, he decided to move to Iran with friends in the 1990s. Bilal described how in Iran, where he stayed for 20 years, he suffered discrimination for being Afghan. Despite speaking Farsi and being a Muslim, his migration status and Hazara ethnic background marked him as an outsider in Iran. He recounted numerous incidents of being stopped by the police and being asked to show his documents. Thus, beyond the crossing of actual physical borders, "everyday border guards", like the Iranian police in Bilal's narrative, continue to monitor the movement of migrants (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Bilal's narrative of ethnic discrimination in Iran offers another example of how political policies create "normative artefacts" (Schapendonk et al., 2021). Although much needed manual workers, Afghans were continually harassed and discriminated against within Iran (Kaytaz, 2016; Crawley and Kaytaz, 2022). Nonetheless, Bilal stayed there for 20 years, married and had two children. Thus, Iran cannot be simplified as a "transit" country through which Bilal passed on his journey to the UK. His story illustrates how his journey involved extended periods of immobility (Sanò and Della Puppa, 2021). Eventually, seeking a better life for his young family, he decided to move with friends to Turkey, with the help of smugglers, whilst his wife and children waited in Iran.

He became vague at providing details about how he got in touch with the smugglers but highlighted the risks he faced while crossing the Iran–Turkey border through the mountains. Bilal became emotional as he revealed that migrants did not differentiate between security forces, immigration officials and smugglers, as they all posed a persistent threat in such a dangerous context: "On the mountains, you encounter many thieves; we don't know if they are from the government, thieves, Turkish civilians... who are they? I don't know".

While interviewing Bilal it was obvious that he was disabled and used a wheelchair. We had assumed this was due to some recent illness or accident because, up to this point in the interview, while describing his journey, he never mentioned the wheelchair. We simply asked at what point his accident occurred as he now uses a wheelchair. To our surprise, he explained that he always used a wheelchair, since childhood, and his entire journey had involved the wheelchair. This incident gave us a new perspective of Bilal's journey experience, revealing how migrant journey narratives may involve taken for granted assumptions that are not explicitly stated or explained in interview encounters.

At our request, Bilal then retold the story of how he had managed to cross the Iran-Turkey border in the wheelchair. It was only at that point that he provided a detailed account of being tied to a horse: "When I said I could not keep myself on the horse, they did not care". He almost broke down in tears when recounting that one of his most tragic experiences in the mountains was the sight of dead bodies who had been shot by the Iranian police: "We just... you don't ask anything". He acknowledged that although he cried when he saw the bodies, the traffickers did not halt for fear they would also be shot: "They [the Iranian police] don't care if you are disabled for example, or you are woman; they don't care. They will shoot you". At that point, Bilal reiterated his lack of trust in those he paid for crossing the mountains and mentioned that he carried a weapon to defend himself: "You pay money but maybe your money has gone, and your life goes too". Bilal's expressions of distrust highlighted the complex

relationality underpinning journeys through illegal routes. He placed his life in the hands of people that he did not trust and who might also pose a threat to his survival.

While he felt less discrimination in Turkey than in Iran, Bilal explained that he and his friends ran out of money and had to sleep in parks. Bilal related an anecdote of meeting a man in a park. The man told Bilal that almost his entire family, except himself and his little daughter, had drowned while trying to reach Greece by boat. Nonetheless, the man stated that he was determined to try again. Throughout Bilal's narrative it is apparent how migrants' collective construction of potential rewards awaiting them beyond Greece motivated the use of highly dangerous routes, with no pre-established plan, or guarantee of success but with the acknowledged risk to their lives (Koikkalainen and Nykänen, 2019). As Bilal explained:

> It is a long process along which most people die. Many people die when they cross from Afghanistan to Iran, but if you stay in Afghanistan, you will die too. Most people don't feel safe; every day you get attacked, there is an explosion, a bomb... But then you are not safe in Iran. So you move to Turkey, and find lots of problem too.

After the conversation with the man in the park, Bilal decided to change his strategy and get a false passport to enter Germany. He was reluctant to explain the process of acquiring false documents and we did not probe. From Germany he crossed to Belgium and then France. He described his experience at the Calais Jungle, where he stayed for 3 months. He underlined the violence inflicted upon migrants by the authorities and lack of institutional support. He explained how people shared stories of attempting to cross to the UK by boat, train and even freezer lorries, which he said he was about to try but he was discouraged from doing so. While his narrative, to some extent, presented an individual endeavor, it is also apparent that relationality was a key enabling factor in his journey. As noted earlier, journeys are narrated as subjective but also collective experiences (Kaytaz, 2016) and it is clear that migrants he met along the way shared information and advice on the risks and viability of particular routes (D'Angelo, 2021). While Bilal was reluctant to tell us about how he finally crossed into England with the help of smugglers, his narrative clearly presented the intricate dimensions of his long and protracted journey *via* illegal routes.

In the UK, he claimed asylum and eventually he got residency a year later. Having secured his status, he was able to bring his wife and children to the UK. His wife is now training in accountancy and he is proud that his children have settled well into school in London. Thus, having lived in the UK for more than 5 years, he presented his migration journey as successful and realizing his dreams.

Sher Shah

We interviewed Sher Shah *via* video link from his bedroom in a "contingency"[6] hotel in London. A 26 year-old student, he fled the

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6 Contingency hotels were used to house migrants who arrived from Afghanistan, via irregular routes, following the Taliban take over. With deportations temporarily halted and off-shoring not yet started, these were intended as short term accommodation while asylum applications were processed.

Taliban in 2021 but he was unable to reach Kabul airport and so was not part of the evacuation. Instead, he used irregular routes to come to London. His narrative provided detailed accounts of his journey over several months and through numerous countries. Unlike Rabiya and Bilal who did not initially intend to move to the UK and who stayed for many years in other countries, Sher Shah had intended to get to the UK as quickly as possible.

His narrative began with his father paying smugglers to take Sher Shah and his wife to Turkey *via* Iran by car and lorry, with a group of other migrants. They started their journey on 30th August 2021: "It was the first time that I came out from my country, and it was difficult". In Turkey, Sher Shah described how he and his wife traveled by minibus with a group of five others: "There were different prices, but I think it was around $2,000 per person [from Iran to Turkey], and we had to pay $4,000 or maybe $5,000 because we were two people".

He became emotional as he narrated an incident that occurred in Turkey. One day having gone out to buy food, Sher Shah returned to the hotel to discover that his wife was gone: "At first, I did not know what had happened. Nobody told me". Later he found out that the Turkish authorities had raided the hotel: "In that hotel there were lots of people from Afghanistan and other places; they took all of them". Sher Shah could not go to the authorities enquiring for his wife as that may mean his own arrest. A few days later he received a phone call from his wife to say that "she had been deported to Iran". His wife persuaded him to carry on without her: "It was hard… she told me not to come back and that there may be hope for me and the family".

Fearful of being arrested and deported, Sher Shah described how he stayed hidden for around 2 months until he was able to hire the services of people to help him continue his journey to Italy: "I knew some people from Afghanistan in Turkey, but they didn't help me". His story suggests that in such dangerous and difficult contexts co-ethnic networks may not be willing to share resources (D'Angelo, 2021).

Throughout his narrative it is apparent that he relied on smugglers to get across national borders, but he was reluctant to tell us how he had contacted those people. While he understood that we were university researchers, it is likely that he was still distrustful of sharing certain details with us. The spatio-temporal context is relevant here because, unlike Bilal and Rabiya who had secure status, Sher Shah was still going through the asylum process. Nonetheless, he appeared to be remarkably open and shared a lot of information in his interview. As noted by Triandafyllidou (2019) in her research in Greece, migrants often discuss their use of smugglers as a taken for granted necessity in facilitating migratory journeys.

Sher Shah described traveling to Italy by boat with approximately 72 people of different nationalities. It took "four days and four nights" to reach the Italian coast: "If someone had intercepted us… they would have sent us back to Turkey". In Italy, they traveled by lorry and train. Then they split into smaller groups, and Sher Shah went with four other people to France. The group spent around 15 days in the Calais Jungle without any support such as fresh clothes, food or a roof over their heads:

> We spent several nights in the rain. It was difficult for us. We had nothing and we stayed there in the jungle without anything, not a place. Then slowly, slowly, we found some help: there was an organization that helped people in Calais, and they helped us; they gave us a tent and some clothes.

In the Jungle, Sher Shah continued to rely on smugglers that his father paid at different points along the way. It was not clear to us if these were the same smuggler organization or different groups in specific countries. Sher Shah became vague when we asked about the smugglers, but he did tell us the varied prices: "From Turkey up to Italy, I paid around €8,500… Lots of money". The smugglers arranged his journey from Calais to Dover by lorry. He narrated the various attempts to enter UK. At first the smugglers tried to get three other people in the back of a lorry, but the police intercepted them and sent them back to Calais. The smugglers then decided it would be safer for Sher Shah to travel alone. He paid £3,000 for this leg of the journey.

Once in the UK, the lorry carrying Sher Shah traveled for several hours. Alone in the back of the lorry, he underlined his feeling of powerlessness and disorientation because his mobile phone battery had died. He was completely out of contact with anyone and was unable to track his location. Eventually the lorry stopped: "I jumped out, and I didn't know the place. It was not Dover… It was near London some place". Sher Shah described walking for about an hour and reaching a small train station. "I asked someone: how can I go to London? And he told me to take this train to London". In London, Sher Shah approached a policeman: "I told him that I came to live here, to help me if it's possible, because I don't know anything here".

Police officers arrested Sher Shah because he had crossed the border illegally: "The whole time was difficult for me. I was scared from the beginning to the end, up to when I went to the police station... and I was very afraid of that place too. But everything has passed here… It was so hard for me". With no knowledge of the system, he claims: "It was the hardest night of my life, so hard for me". At this point, Sher Shah interrupted the story, he moved away from the camera and we were unable to see him. He said he needed a break. Because the interview was taking place by video platform it was difficult for us to comfort him or to see how upset he had become. After some time, he moved back to the camera, looking visibly upset, but agreed to continue, though we offered him the opportunity to pause or stop. He seemed keen to tell his story, though he did not wish to elaborate on what happened at the police station.

He claimed asylum on 10th December 2021 and was sent to a contingency hotel in South London. Since then, he has been relocated outside London. We have emailed to him to know how he is doing but he has not replied.

Although Sher Shah was fleeing the Taliban at the same time as those evacuated from Kabul airport, his journey to the UK, treatment upon arrival and route to asylum are very different from the evacuees. As noted at the start of the paper and illustrated by our two examples below, Afghans who were evacuated directly from Kabul airport are on a direct route to secure status and hence are treated very differently from those who fled the same situation but arrived in the UK *via* irregular routes. Sher Shah tried to go to the airport but was not successful. As discussed below, there was a randomness to who was evacuated from Kabul and who was not. Sher Shah's story illustrates how immigration regimes create "normative artefacts", categories of

deserving and undeserving migrants, even within the same national and ethnic groups.

Evacuees' stories

Abubakar

We interviewed Abubakar at a so-called "bridging"[7] hotel, in central London, while he was waiting to be re-housed. Prior to his evacuation, Abubakar informed us, he had held a senior level government post in Afghanistan. The sudden collapse of the government in August 2021 had come as a shock, he explained.

He described witnessing tanks pouring on to the streets, to the astonishment of the general population and to government officials like himself. He recounted how the Taliban rebuked him: "You have a very big Land Cruiser, bullet-proof car, and this belongs to the government". Abubakar explained the risks associated with being identified as a government official and how he had tried to conceal his role from the Taliban soldiers. He narrated the conversation: "See my document, this car does not belong to government; it's mine". A Taliban commander had then said: "You don't have a beard"; Abubakar replied: "I don't have it", and the commander slapped him. In this short but powerful exchange, Abubakar conveys his sense of danger, given his former position within the government, and the risks posed to him by the incoming Taliban regime.

He shared another anecdote with us to underline the rapidity with which the situation changed and the growing danger for him: "When I was living in Kabul, in front of my house there were some guys selling tomatoes and cucumbers in a cart. When I came to my house, those guys had guns and used turbans. Everywhere I went, I heard: 'Oh, you work for the government, we will kill you!'".

Desperate to leave Afghanistan, Abubakar described quickly mobilizing his connections with the British authorities in Kabul. On 18th August 2021, he sent a WhatsApp message to the British Embassy asking for help to leave: "my life is not safe, I want to go somewhere". A week later, the British Ministry of Defense asked for his full name and passport number and sent him an email with instructions to go to the Baron Hotel, near the airport, "as soon as possible".

Abubakar described the scene as he approached the processing center: "a lot of rush and scrabbling of people'. Despite his former rank and authority, he now needed to join the queue alongside thousands of other Afghans. Waiting in the queue for eight hours, Abubakar recounted that a man organizing the queue asked with surprise: "'What are you doing here?'" I said: "What is everybody doing here? We all want to leave Afghanistan". "Do you have any approval, like an email?" I said: "Yes, I have my email". "Please come to the gate"." This encounter seems to imply that the official was surprised to find a high-ranking government official in the queue (*what are you doing here?*) and quickly moved Abubakar's inside the processing center. Rank and connections can facilitate the processes of crossing borders. After a very short time, he was on the plane and

on his way to the UK. The evacuation, although chaotic and highly dangerous, as mentioned at the start of the paper, was also relatively quick. In contrast to the long, protracted journey of people like Sher Shah who traveled for months *via* Turkey and Greece to France and finally to the UK, evacuees found themselves traveling from Kabul to London within 24 hours.

Upon arrival in London, Abubakar narrated his continued efforts to mobilize his connections through personal social ties. He made contact with a British politician whom he met in Afghanistan. However, despite repeated messaging, so far, this individual had not been available for a meeting. This situation is quite interesting because it is apparent that Abubakar had successfully mobilized his contacts to expedite his passage out of Kabul, at a time when many thousands of Afghans were unable to do so. However, once in the UK and now a refugee, rather than a senior government official, it seemed to be harder to mobilize these influential connections highlighting barriers to accessing "vertical social ties" (Ryan, 2016).

Although Abubakar was keen to assert his status, and presented us with his recently printed business cards, it was also clear that his imagined future in the UK had started to undergo re-evaluation. While stating his wish to work with the UK government in some advisory capacity, nevertheless, he seemed mindful of the struggles and disappointments that may be encountered in realizing his imagined future. His cousin in the UK works as a taxi driver. Abubakar recounted conversations with other refugees in his hotel in which they advise each other: "don't work in the Pizza Hut and minicab in Uber". Even by mentioning such jobs, Abubakar indicated his concerns about the possibility of becoming trapped in low skilled, low paid work. Thus, he tried to preserve his dream of a government job, while watching other Afghans become Uber drivers.

Another potential threat to his imagined future is the public perception of refugees. At the moment he perceived British society as welcoming of Afghan refugees and he described everyday interactions when people say "you're most welcome".

Nonetheless, Abubakar expressed concerns about other Afghans arriving in the UK *via* irregular routes.

> "[Before the Afghan government collapsed in 2021,] there was no poverty: we had food; everybody had a job. There was no poverty. In that time, nobody wanted to come illegally to the UK. When the government collapsed, the international community, especially the UK government, decided to help the Afghan people because some of them had very good relationship with the British government and the embassies. So they decided to bring these kind of people to the UK. Before 2021, refugees came to the UK illegally without permission of the government. Afghan refugees are most welcome by the UK government because of the approval of the Parliament".

In this way, Abubakar clearly sought to distance himself, a "genuine" refugee, who is on track to receive full status in the UK, in contrast to Afghans who had entered the UK "illegally". He calls into question the legitimacy of their claims for refuge. In so doing, he appears to completely accept and reproduce the UK government discourse that distinguish between "deserving" and "undeserving" refugees.

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7 Bridging hotels were usually high-end hotels, including 5 star hotels, used to temporarily house evacuees. Because of the Covid-pandemic, those hotels happened to be empty in summer 2021. Although intended to be temporary, while waiting for permanent re-housing, we found that many of our participants were still living there more than one year later.

Malala

We interviewed Malala online, from her room in a bridging hotel, though we later met her in person during several dissemination events. Malala (23) and her two sisters (25 and 26) arrived in the UK as part of the evacuation in August 2021. Malala told us how her father passed away when she was seven years old, and, several years later her mother had left Afghanistan to join a brother in another country. Thus, Malala and her sisters were living in Kabul "without a male guardian". When the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021, Malala was a university student, studying journalism and computing, with dreams of setting up an all-female IT company: "I studied Computer Science and saw how women struggle to find a job because in Afghanistan the belief is that women are not good at IT. I wanted to set up a company and hire female employee and challenge the status quo". However, her imagined future was destroyed when the Taliban took control of Kabul.

Malala's narrative powerfully evoked her shock when the government suddenly collapsed on 15th August 2021. Her sister had worked in a government department, moreover without a male guardian the three siblings felt vulnerable: "Everyone was scared. We hide our ID cards because I was a University student and a journalist, which were both very dangerous".

In an effort to escape from Kabul, Malala told us how she quickly mobilized her social capital by enlisting the help of a journalist from a well-known European newspaper. Malala had gotten to know this journalist by assisting her on some stories in Afghanistan. "We were in touch all night and day. We were hopeless that it might work because the situation was bad at the airport".

The British Embassy responded on the last day of the evacuation, 26th August, and the three sisters headed to the airport. They tried to convince the authorities that their emails were authentic while standing for hours in a filthy canal: "The men didn't trust us... They just looked at our documents and handed them back to us". Malala told us that many people were using faked IDs or claiming people as their relatives in order to secure their evacuation, while "so many other people who deserved to be evacuated were left behind". In the chaos at the airport, Malala asserted the seeming randomness of who was evacuated and who was left behind: "I was so shocked, because there were a lot of people…and they were not at risk at all, and they were allowed to go through". She told us about an Afghan policewoman who was in danger from the Taliban but, without influential connections to support her claims, was unable to navigate the evacuation process and was left behind. Thus, in contrast to Abubakar who positioned himself as a deserving refugee unlike those arriving "illegally", Malala presents a more nuanced picture that suggests the apparent unfairness of who achieved evacuee status.

Malala vividly described the dangerous scene at the airport. After waiting for hours she finally caught the attention of two British female soldiers: "They found me in the water; I handed the emails to them, and then they checked my sisters' names, and they allowed us all to get in". The British Army checked the sisters' IDs and interviewed them because they did not have British passports. They then checked their identities by phoning their influential contact, the well-known journalist, and the British Embassy, and finally gave the sisters permission to leave Kabul.

Malala and her sisters traveled on a military plane from Kabul to Doha, where they stayed for one night, and then were put on a commercial flight to London. Malala recounted her mixed feelings:

> "It was kind of joy that I was safe, and it was sad that I was leaving my country behind and lots of friends behind… I was worried about everyone".

After their plane landed at Heathrow, they were hosted in a quarantine hotel for 10 days and then moved to a bridging hotel in Central London, where they remained for over 1 year. Having suddenly found herself in London without any prior plan to leave Afghanistan, Malala, like many other evacuees, is having to rebuild her life, re-define her dreams and re-imagine her future in the UK. Unlike those who embark on long journeys where much time is devoted to imagining a new life in the destination society (Koikkalainen and Nykänen, 2019), rapid evacuation offers little time for refugees to imagine what their new lives will look like. Malala and her sisters had no plan to move to London. Their imagined future involved study and work in Afghanistan. Now, they find it hard to even imagine a return to their homeland while the Taliban is in control. Malala explained how she was embarking on a new course of study and trying to restart her life and regain her dreams in London. Unlike those who are contained within asylum processing centers (Gough and Gough, 2019) or in contingency hotels like Sher Shah, awaiting their fate, Afghan evacuees in London have the right to access education and training. Malala concluded: "I feel so lucky that I am here, otherwise my sisters and I were alone in Afghanistan, and God knows what would happen to us".

Conclusion

In this paper we have presented rich case studies drawn from our diverse Afghan participants. A novel feature of our research is that it included Afghans who arrived in the UK over many decades from the 1990s up to the 2020s *via* a range of different routes. The inclusion of recent evacuees has allowed us to consider how their experiences differ not only from earlier arrivals but also from Afghans currently arriving *via* unofficial routes.

Engaging with the concept of "migrant journey" (Amrith, 2021; Gough and Gough, 2019; Crawley and Jones, 2021; Schapendonk et al., 2021) and using journey narratives as an interpretative device (Mason, 2004; Kaytaz, 2016), we have applied a spatio-temporal lens (Erel and Ryan, 2019) to analyse how migrants' journey narratives are situated within particular places and through time. For example, we have shown the continuities but also changes in socio-political contexts as well as other infrastructures especially the use of mobile communication technologies. Analyzing journey narratives, through a multi-level spatio-temporal lens, we have sought to advance understanding of the dynamic interplay of macro socio-structural contexts, meso level of inter-personal networks and micro level individual migrant agency.

On the macro level, we have shown how different policies of the British government toward Afghans, arriving *via* different

routes, has created an artificial distinction between those who are fleeing the same conflict. In marked contrast to the proclaimed welcome for Afghan evacuees, those escaping the Taliban regime *via* illegal routes are vilified as undeserving and fraudulent in public discourses and "irregularised" (El-Enany, 2020) in immigration policies with the threat of being off-shored in Rwanda. Hence, while it is known that different migration categories are "normative artefacts" produced by immigration policies (Schapendonk et al., 2021), our paper goes further by showing how this categorization can occur even within the same national grouping at the same moment in time.

On the micro level, it is apparent that, in contexts of extreme danger where migrants were confronted by the risk of death, their individual narratives present agentic qualities in overcoming repeated hazards in journeys over land and sea. However, even if traveling alone, the role of significant others, acting on the meso level between the individual and the wider structures (Ryan, 2023), indicates the key role of networks as a linking theme throughout the narratives. Those traveling *via* irregular routes relied on complex and dynamic ties ranging from enduring kinship ties to fleeting contacts with fellow travelers. However, network ties are not necessarily positive and, although essential to their journey, relations with smugglers could be exploitative and dangerous (D'Angelo, 2021). Access to networks was also a factor in navigating the chaos of Kabul airport during the evacuation process. Those with vertical ties (Ryan, 2016) to influential contacts, such as foreign journalists and embassy officials, were able to secure safe and speedy passage out of Afghanistan. By contrast, it is apparent that some people who faced risks from the Taliban, but who lacked influential contacts, were left behind. Thus, far from being fair, the evacuation process underlined privilege and power, further complicating categories of "deserving" and "undeserving".

Finally, by applying the spatio-temporal lens to our diverse dataset, our paper also advances understanding the role of imagination in how migrants' journey narratives are told in research encounters. Our diverse participants, traveling at different times and through different routes, have offered varying insights into how future and past lives are imagined and presented in journey narratives. For some, especially those who left Afghanistan many years ago, narratives can involve a reflection on how the imagined future has been realized (or not) over time. Imagination is a key ingredient in the narrative of migrant journey not just as a story of the past but as a device for making sense of their present and expected future. By contrast, for those who recently arrived, especially those who experienced rapid evacuation and who suddenly found themselves in London, almost overnight, imagined futures are still being constructed as they adjust to new and unfamiliar environments. Moreover, those who had recently arrived *via* irregular routes are in positions of uncertainty about their future migration status, and thus their narratives present on-going journeys through asylum applications. They do not know how, when and where their story will end.

The UK policy of closing down routes of legal entry and making the asylum process more difficult, has resulted in rising numbers of people trying to enter the country through irregular routes.[8] As

noted by many NGOs, it would be more humane to assess asylum applications based on the actual risks and threats faced by individuals rather than on their route of entry.[9] As the UK courts recently declared the planned off-shoring to be legal,[10] there is a real risk that Afghans fleeing the Taliban, but who narrowly missed out on evacuation, will be denied any legal route to asylum in the UK and will instead face the prospect of being off-shored in Rwanda.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by London Metropolitan University. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

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8   https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/why-the-governments-approach-to-channel-crossings-fails-people-in-need-of-protection/

9   https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/safe-routes-save-futures/

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Bordering seafarers at sea and onshore

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This study uses a historically informed lens of coloniality, bordering, and intersectionality to analyze maritime bordering discourses and practices that target seafarers recruited from the Global South who embody the border in their everyday lives. In seeking to explain the current context exemplified by the sacking of P&O Ferry workers and the recruitment of "foreign agency" crews in March 2022, the study foregrounds 19th- and 20th-century maritime bordering legislation on ships and onshore, focusing on public-/private-bordering partnerships between governments, shipping companies, and unions. Archival research on British Indian seafarers employed by P&O a century ago and analysis of contemporary media and political discourses relating to "foreign agency crews" are drawn on to consider the implications of earlier bordering discourses and practices for 21st-century British citizenship and belonging. Attending to imperial bordering regulations that created the racialized and class-defined labor category of *lascars* explains the "common sense" designations of seafarers recruited in the Global South and their families as potential "illegal migrants," and in doing so, it constitutes the long history of the public/private partnerships that constitute the UK's "hostile environment" immigration policies.

KEYWORDS

bordering, embodiment, seafarers, *lascar*, coloniality, maritime, intersectionality, containment

1. Introduction

This special issue, *Bodies at Borders*, focuses on the objectification and containment of migrant bodies at border crossings. An immediate question is whether or not seafarers—who spend their working lives in transit at sea or contained at docksides and who are expected to return to their countries of origin between contracts—should be considered "migrants." The negative answer to this question arises in the context of labor migration theory (Borovnik, 2004), particularly in relation to seafarers recruited from the Global South, whose passports limit their possibilities of settlement elsewhere and is made "common sense" in media and political discourse partially through the onshore invisibility of the everyday experiences of the racialized, class-defined and gendered hierarchies of seafaring life.

In this study, I explore historical contexts and practices of borders and borderings that have contributed to this 21st-century silencing discourse of global coloniality (Trouillot, 1996; Tlostanova and Mignolo, 2012). In doing so, I demonstrate how 19th- and 20th-century maritime and nationality legislation and bordering practices combined to prevent seafaring British Indian men racialized as *lascars* from settling in the UK and white settler colonies—an explicit aim being to prevent them from becoming legally settled "migrants." I draw on, but cannot do justice to, wide-ranging research of colonial labor and maritime history which continues to contextualize and give voice to the experiences of seafarers recruited from Britain's empire (Tabili, 1994; Visram, 2002; Ahuja, 2006; Balachandran, 2012; Manjrekar, 2019). These, together with oral and family histories of Indian seafarers born in the first half of the 20th century collected by citizen historians, are the rare sources where the voices are heard of seafarers recruited

under British colonial rule who eventually settled in the UK (Adams, 1987; Choudhury, 1993, 1995; Shakoor, 2018, 2020). Due to their confinement at sea, below deck in the engine rooms, exclusionary legislation, together with the (until recently) marginal academic interest in their globalizing significance (Balachandran, 2013), they remain outside most analyses of migration and border studies (cf. Popescu, 2012; Castles et al., 2014; El-Enany, 2020).

In centering the objectification and containment of seafarers recruited from the Global South, I use the key concepts of bordering and everyday bordering (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). In doing so, I explore the interplays between neoliberal globalization and the coloniality of racialized national and international maritime employment practices, dockside accommodation policies, and laws that combine exclude, contain and control "foreign seafarers" imagined as suspected border crossers *ergo* "illegal migrants." I show how the maritime bordering of bodies has proliferated from the days of sail through the era of steamships and continues to be central to national and global operations of neoliberal globalization. This article uses an intersectional lens in focusing on the classed and racialized bordering on board ships and at the littoral border crossing of the UK docks, the space between the competing jurisdictions of the ship and the land, and the material site of the discursive objectification and physical containment of racialized maritime laborers recruited overseas, who embody the British border. It demonstrates how maritime bordering laws of the British empire, enacted through partnerships between government, private companies, and individuals, constitute the long history of so-called "hostile environment" immigration policies where everyday bordering discourses and practices target differently situated working class, minoritized men and women (Wemyss, 2015; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019).

The article is divided into three sections. Section one sets out the theoretical framework through the illustrative example of the overnight dismissal by the DP World-owned P&O Ferries of 800 unionized "British" crews and their immediate replacement with low-paid "foreign" agency workers in March 2022. The theoretical and analytical framework draws together the concepts of global coloniality, neoliberal globalization, and bordering that I argue work together to create and maintain racialized, exclusionary, and hierarchical labor categories. The section focuses on parliamentary, union, employer, and media discourses about P&O Ferries and crews from 2022 to understand the coloniality of bordering experienced by seafarers explored in sections two and three. In seeking to understand the current context exemplified by P&O Ferries and DP World, section two attends to 19th- and 20th-century discriminatory colonial bordering employment laws experienced by British Indian seafarers employed on inferior contracts, which placed them in the racialized labor category of *lascars*. The section focuses on shifting bordering partnerships of the East India Company, British governments, and from the 1840s, the P&O company and their roles in creating, upholding, or sometimes challenging the exclusionary legislation and practices. Section three focuses on bordering onshore, reaching inland from the docks. I use the illustrative example from a century ago of a "hulk" reported as being used by the P&O Shipping Company to house British Indian seafarers in London's Royal Albert Docks. Discourses about the "hulk" and common lodging houses are discussed to explain historical practices of bordering where government, unions, and shipping companies partnered to control and contain British subjects categorized as *lascars*,

imagined as potential "illegal" migrants. The conclusion brings together threads from these histories of public/private bordering practices *via* maritime legislation and the P&O shipping company's past and present discriminatory practices in the context of 21st-century neoliberal globalization to consider the implications of the continuing objectification and containment of racialized seafarers and these earlier bordering laws for 21st-century hierarchies of British citizenship and belonging.

2. Section one: P&O, coloniality, and bordering

On 17 March 2022, P&O Ferries (P&O) made 786 seafarers redundant, stating the necessity of improving business viability through a change to its crewing model from permanent to agency staff, many recruited from the Philippines. The seafarers were mostly British citizens living in the UK but employed under Jersey law working on ferries registered in Cyprus, Bermuda, and Barbados. P&O's strategy was to bypass legally binding consultation with the unions [Section 188 of the Trade Union and Labor Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992]. The employer calculated that they could afford any additional costs resulting from that breach of procedure by offering employees redundancy compensation above the legal requirements and incentivizing dismissed employees from costly disputes of the redundancies in the courts (Stones, 2022). P&O leaders had determined that no union would accept the new operating model and argued that any other option would result in P&O Ferries not being viable. The redundancies were announced with immediate effect *via* a pre-recorded video. Private security guards were employed to escort crew from ferries on the UK/Europe and UK/ Ireland routes. P&O Ferries management announced that the ships would remain in harbor for several days, while agency crew were brought in and trained. In the days that followed, news reports indicated that the new agency staff were predominantly "foreign," employed on lower wages, and expected to live on board the ships for a 6-month period. While the voices of British employees and unions were, to different extents, present across various media, and conditions of "foreign" agency workers were described by others, the voices of agency workers themselves were absent (e.g., see BBC, 2022; Daily Mail, 2022; Hull Daily Mail, 2022; The Guardian, 2022; The Telegraph, 2022). I argue that the invisibility of the lives and voices of seafarers from the Global South, working from British ports, is constitutive of today's everyday bordering discourses that are rooted in colonial-era maritime everyday bordering legislation.

The words and actions of DP World, the global conglomerate owner of P&O Ferries, exemplify the view of neoliberalism as a form of government that sees democracy as an obstacle or even as an illegitimate intervention to the rule of the market (Brown, 2015). Soon after the sackings, the CEO of P&O Ferries, Peter Hebblethwaite, supported online by a representative of DP World, told a joint hearing of Parliament's transport and business committee that "there is absolutely no doubt that we were required to consult with the unions. We chose not to do so" (Topham, 2022). In this case, DP World was treating popular sovereignty, including the agreements reached between unions and governments, as inappropriate interference with the efficiency of the market. Nationally negotiated labor agreements are particularly challenging to global capital since the increased flexibility of labor, differential

rates of pay, and heterogeneous labor markets have been integral to the expansion of global capitalism (Harvey, 1989; Brambilla et al., 2015). Different bordering legislation and practices have developed alongside the neoliberal restructuring of capitalism in ways that work to regulate labor (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). As others have argued, the processes of contemporary neoliberal globalization are context-specific and heterogeneous in effect, often contradictory and unstable (Ward and England, 2007; Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008), making it necessary to understand neoliberalism as it actually exists in its different manifestations, including through the various bordering processes that regulate capital and labor past and present (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019).

The absence of the voices of the seafarers recruited from the Global South in political and media discourses is constitutive of bordering processes that have contributed to their historical silencing in dominant narratives of British history. I explore in the following paragraphs how this 21st-century invisibility is rooted in legal and cultural colonial bordering processes that sought to ensure the containment of racialized seafarers in vessels at sea and in the liminal, littoral spaces of the docks in the metropole and white settler colonies. Like 19th-century seafarers, P&O Ferries agency staff embody the border, becoming identified as suspected illegal border crossers and as "not migrants." Global coloniality frames and continues to form present-day state-bordering practices and everyday bordering processes of the UK. I bring the work of maritime historians (Balachandran, Ahuja, Ewald, and Tabili) into an analytical framework informed by the concepts of bordering and everyday bordering to evidence how colonial employment categories and related bordering discourses and immigration practices worked together over four centuries to exclude the seafarers recruited in the British Empire and thus to ensure that others recruited later from elsewhere in the Global South continue to be excluded from the UK.

Tlostanova and Mignolo (2012, p. 7) explain global coloniality as the "model of power relations that came into existence as a consequence of the Western imperial expansion but did not end with the official end of colonialism and colonial administrations." While historical European colonialism is (mostly) past, the relations of coloniality endure. The power relations of global coloniality include historical cultural and labor relations together with knowledge production that both enables and restricts the ways differently situated people imagine their position in the world and their relationships with others. Twenty-first-century bordering processes targeted at seafarers are rooted in 19th-century laws that themselves evolved from 17th-century English legislation that all worked to include and exclude differently situated people in different times and spaces. Maritime and immigration bordering legislation, associated practices, and discourses created mobile labor categories that aimed to prevent working-class British Indian subjects from settling in the UK, producing and reproducing racialized hierarchies of Britishness and belonging. These relations of coloniality continue to circumscribe the lives of "foreign agency" seafarers, preventing Filipino seafarers from crossing the border when working in British waters and from settling in the UK.

Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, governments in the Global South and North have been visibly strengthening state borders that were commonly created through European wars and colonial treaties. External walls or fences are constructed in parallel with increasing border checks at internal sites. While neoliberal

globalization has been associated with the de-bordering of goods, financial services, and global elites, it has also been accompanied by re-bordering inside and outside of state territories in the name of securitization. State borders have always been created, reconstructed, and experienced in diverse ways, by differently situated people, at multiple levels and sites across time and space. They are intended to act as filters—permeable for those permitted to or able to cross them and impermeable to others (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Bordering processes constitute a principal organizing mechanism in constructing, maintaining, and controlling social and political order from local to global scales. van Houtum et al. (2005) notion of "b/ordering"—the interaction between the ordering of chaos and processes of border making—encapsulates the relationship between bordering and governance whereby b/ordering discourses and practices create and recreate categories of those who are included and those who are excluded from national collectivities. Processes of bordering always differentiate between "us" and "them," those who are in and those who are out, those who are allowed to cross the borders, and those who are not. "Everyday bordering" refers to the everyday construction of *state* borders through ideology, cultural mediation, discourses, political institutions, attitudes, and everyday forms of transnationalism. In the UK, everyday bordering is integral to the government's "hostile environment" immigration regulations (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Through everyday bordering processes, state borders have moved into the center of political and social life, as citizens are obliged to check the immigration status of tenants, employees, and patients, for example, redefining contemporary notions of citizenship and belonging for racialized minorities and hegemonic majorities (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). Thus, discourses and practices of borderings are situated and constituted through political negotiations and interwoven into the everyday intersectional encounters between differently situated individuals (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). In present-day Britain, the UK, discourses and practices of everyday bordering materially and culturally reproduce exclusionary imaginations of Britishness and, as such, are enduring components of global coloniality that are experienced to different extents by differently situated people.

Immigration and nationality legislation have worked in bordering and racially ordering European nations over centuries of colonial expansion. Successive laws have created and policed borders that sought to maintain a global racialized order established by colonization. Empire-authored records were part of an ideology of containment that sought to convey that imperial control was effective in imposing racialized order onto a chaotic and transient situation (Goodall et al., 2008). Bordering discourses work in similar ways in the context of globalization, presenting an image of order being maintained in national imaginaries.

In the case of the UK, past and present legislation relating to Britain and its colonies have resulted in wealth accumulated globally being located within the borders of the UK. Immigration legislation has ensured that assets in the form of infrastructure, welfare provision, and future opportunities for citizens are inaccessible to most descendants of Britain's colonial subjects. In different times and colonial spaces, intentionally discriminatory bordering legislation has been made to appear "race-neutral" (El-Enany, 2020). Post-independence, bordering technologies such as those that constitute the hostile environment maintain the permeability in state borders for the citizens of Britain's white settler colonies while

blocking citizens of Britain's African, Asian, and Caribbean colonies. While these arguments have been convincingly made elsewhere, the invisibility of the liminal working lives of seafarers has meant that the significance of maritime laws and practices of shipping companies to histories of bordering targeted at men recruited from the Global South are not well known. To contextualize 21st-century racialized maritime bordering processes, I now explore recent media and political discourses about the 2022 sackings of the P&O Ferry crew that have been, to some extent, formed through imperial-era discourses and practices of the P&O company.

2.1. P&O: Icon of empire

> P&O is one of those businesses widely thought of as a British icon, but which has infact been chewed up by the machinery of globalization (Cumming, 2022).

The above statement, made in the features section of the *Daily Telegraph* soon after the sacking of the P&O Ferries' workers, was part of a dominant discourse that drew on notions of P&O as a national icon tied to Britain's historical greatness based on its sea power. While the past being referred to was obviously that of the British empire, the discourse avoided making direct links to Britain's imperial history. In this case, that avoidance was facilitated through the focus on UK-based ferries. Moreover, rather than being a victim of globalization, as this quote suggests, P&O, with its imperial roots and routes, was very much constitutive of neoliberal globalization's heterogeneous, shifting forms. As I argue in the following sections, the company's profits were boosted over 180 years through either lobbying government to regulate the labor market through specific bordering legislation, or in different circumstances, by bypassing bordering legislation.

The P&O name has existed since 1837 in various iterations and changing fortunes, buying up other companies and taking over different transoceanic routes. It was significant in servicing the British empire through its mail, cargo, and passenger steamships. The notion that P&O was a great national undertaking rather than simply a commercial steamer service was encouraged by the founding managing director, Arthur Anderson, who "positioned, promoted and politicized P&O as a company with name and influence" (Cox, 2022). In 1854, Anderson claimed:

> [P&O] has now attained to a magnitude and national importance unprecedented in the annals of private maritime enterprise in this or any country of the world -a circumstance which I cannot help regarding with strong feelings of pride (Cox, 14 March 2022).

When P&O amalgamated with its main rival, the British India Steam Navigation, in 1914, the Peninsula and Orient Steam Navigation Company became the world's largest shipping conglomerate playing important roles in transporting food and troops in the First and Second World Wars. A 150th-anniversary publication referred to P&O as a "phenomenal company" that had diversified into enterprises well beyond shipping but remained anchored to traditions of trust, loyalty, service, and pride (Jack, 2022). As markets restructured in the context of neoliberal globalization,

The P&O Steam Navigation Company bought various UK-based coastal shipping and ferry companies through the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, rebranding that part of the business as P&O Ferries. In 2000, the P&O cruise business was sold to Carnival, and in 2006, the rest of P&O, including P&O Ferries, was sold to Dubai World and in 2019 to the Dubai government-owned DP World transport and logistics conglomerate (Collard, 2021). At the time of the sackings, P&O Ferries accounted for ~15% of all cargo entering and leaving the UK, and DP World was a major investor in the multibillion-pound Solent and Thames Gateway freeport schemes near Southampton and London, respectively (Oliver and Cahill, 2022).

2.2. Racialized bordering discourses

Following the crew dismissals, political and media debates about the actions of P&O Ferries were constructed through a discourse that drew on related nationalist notions. These were as follows: first, of P&O as a British icon tied to imperial greatness and second, of British exceptionalism as an island, seagoing "race" threatened by globalization. That discourse was evident in journalist Cumming's later comment, "For an island race with sea in our veins, cross channel sailings are more than just transport" and that of travel writer, Adrian Bridges, quoted in the same article, "We are an island nation and going to sea has always been a huge part of our heritage and history. On a ferry we're connecting with who we are as a people" (Cumming, 2022).

Politicians and media commentators with different positionalities and political perspectives shared this discourse of P&O as a famous icon of the "island nation" in arguing for "decency," "fair play," and the need for "British crews." In a special debate about the sackings (Hansard, 2022), the Conservative Party Transport Secretary drew on the imagery of national pride attached to the names of the foreign-owned and foreign-flagged ships to demonstrate his commitment to British workers.

> To have a ship called *Spirit of Britain, Pride of Kent* or any other name that attaches it to this country when it does not have British workers would be completely wrong, and I will be calling on P&O to change the name of the ships (Grant Shapps M.P., UK Secretary of State for Transport *Hansard* 21/3/2022).

The Labor Party shadow minister used the same discourse when drawing on an imagined past of seafaring labor relations that, through the elision of colonial histories of legalized discrimination and conflict, I argue below, has contributed to the continuing exclusion of workers recruited from the Global South:

> We are an island nation. British seafaring has been and is the envy of the world, and a sense of fair play and decency runs deep in this country: it is part of who we are. The action on Thursday was a straightforward assault on that tradition and on our values, so deeply entwined with our identity and synonymous with our global reputation. (Louise Haigh M.P., UK Shadow Secretary of State for Transport *Hansard* 21/3/2022).

In parallel with representing their British membership, union discourses contributed to the othering of agency crew members. On its website, the general secretary of the professional seafarer's union, Nautilus International, represented the sacking of crews by P&O

Ferries as "a betrayal of British workers" (Nautilus International, 2022) and the leader of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) Workers was quoted using the dehumanizing word "import," to refer to P&O's employment of "other" over "our" people:

> We think they are importing Indian workers, Filipinos and Ukrainians at the moment to work on these vessels. That cannot be acceptable. We cannot dismiss our people to bring in other people on a discount rate (Daily Mail, 2022).

P&O Ferries' policy of replacing permanent British crews with cheaper foreign agency workers had started several years earlier. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the RMT had complained that the company was not working with the union to replace furloughed UK crews; instead, it was hiring agency crews from the Philippines below the UK minimum wage on the *Pride of Hull* (RMT, 2020). Karl Turner, the Hull MP, described agency crews who had earlier replaced British crews as going "to and from Rotterdam as prisoners in their crew cabins. Their terms of employment are appalling" (Hull Daily Mail, 2022). The on board containment and precarity of agency working conditions, although acknowledged by some commentators as reasons for the agency workers' compliance, silence, and invisibility, were not situated in the context of global coloniality in ways that would have challenged dominant discourses about the disputes.

In 2020, the P&O Ferries CEO justified low wages paid to Filipino crews in a discourse that obscures the context of global coloniality and neoliberal bordering that Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) have shown has created increasingly unequal labor markets. Through the silencing of colonial histories, that discourse is itself a constituent of 21st-century everyday bordering processes.

> As a *family* brand, we take the welfare of *our* people seriously … all of *our* Filipino seafarers live on board on an "all found" basis during their tour of duty. This means that they benefit from food and accommodation free of charge and flights home to the Philippines are provided for in their contracts… The cash pay of *our* Filipino seafarers is closer to £4.50 per hour and substantially more when factoring in the free accommodation and food. Wages in shipping are unique. Yes—this basic figure is less than the UK National Minimum Wage, but that is completely irrelevant as the seafarers do not interact at all with the UK economy and, importantly, *they* consider this to be a fair wage. Indeed, their wage is 6.5 times higher than the minimum wage in the Philippines and twice as much as the average salary of anyone in *their* home country, where *they* spend *their* income (Hull Daily Mail, 2020; my emphasis).

In a dispute a year earlier, P&O Ferries had defended the 6-month rotation, whereby crews lived on board the ferries, as "standard industry practice in the maritime sector" and as "negotiated by the unions in their home countries" according to the "standards required by the International Transport Federation and the Maritime Labor Convention" (Hull Daily Mail, 2019). In section two, I show how the employment contracts that the P&O CEO refers to have roots in maritime bordering legislation that was continually adjusted in the days of imperial shipping to suit the interests of shipping companies, especially those of P&O and colonial governments. As well as the bordering work done by the contracts, the paternalistic

language of a shared P&O family - where "our" workers are spoken for - echoes how the relationship between south Asian seafarers and European officers was constructed from the 17th century. It works as a bordering discourse in 2022 by excluding the voices of the workers (predominantly assumed to be men) and normalizes the neoliberal globalized work context positing that it is advantageous to be confined to a ship and separated from family for a 6-month period. In contrast, before that dispute, a white British male mechanic employed by P&O Ferries working the Dover—Calais route told me that he enjoyed his working pattern of 2 weeks on board ferries and 2 weeks off. He had to live on board for extended periods as it supported the 45-min change over time in the ports. However, he said he enjoyed the fortnight with his family, who all benefitted from a travel concession allowing them frequent holidays in Europe (interviewed in a Calais café in August 2014).

From a different perspective, the "island nation" trope was used at the time of the P&O sackings to argue for P&O Ferries and their crews as military reservists. *The Daily Telegraph* foregrounded security concerns about "foreign crews" through letters from Merchant Navy and Royal Navy officers:

> Today, Britain's ocean-going fleet is almost entirely manned by foreigners, none of whom could be expected to fight and die for our country as did 35,000 merchant seamen during the Second World War. That P&O Ferries should sack its British seafarers does not come as a surprise. What is surprising is that the British Government should allow it given that ferries are the only means by which our soldiers can be delivered overseas, as they were in the Falkland Islands (Newton, 2022).
>
> We are an island nation. As such we must ensure we have an adequate number of British officers and ratings available to man our merchant ships in both peacetime and wartime (Lang, 2022).

Both letters omitted that in the Second World War, a quarter of seafarers in the Merchant Navy were British Indian men, 6,600 of whom died in the conflict, which they were expected to support as subjects of empire (Visram, 2002, p. 347). The above-selected examples demonstrate how bordering discourses work to objectify and silence "foreign agency" workers recruited to work on P&O Ferries. While political and media discourses about the changes in the P&O labor strategy have included voices of British workers, beyond their union representatives and MPs, those of the "foreign" agency workers are harder to locate. Public debates have focused on the low pay, long working hours, lack of training, and relevant experience of agency workers in contrast to the long-term experience and redundancy compensation of the unionized "British seafarers." In addition to the working conditions, the accommodation, rights to move across the border, and living conditions of agency staff are issues largely ignored.

To understand how contemporary bordering discourses, employment laws, immigration regulations, and other bordering practices work to reproduce exclusions of seafarers recruited in the Global South and related notions of white Britishness and belonging, it is essential to understand their colonial roots. While I cannot do justice here to the political and economic contestations that make up these complex histories, in the following two sections, I excavate illustrative examples of relations of global coloniality that have contributed to the framing of the parliamentary, shipping company, and media discourses that impact on the lives of agency workers employed by P&O Ferries.

3. Section two: Racialized bordering at sea

In seeking to understand the current bordering practices exemplified by the recruitment practices of P&O Ferries and DP World, I discuss selected historical material practices of bordering, including those supported by the P&O company in its earlier iterations, when its "flagships of Imperialism" supported by government mail subsidies and the opium trade was the largest British employer of Indian seafarers (Balachandran, 2012). As P&O was expanding toward becoming a global business, it worked with the British government to deny Indian seafarers equal working conditions and from settling in the UK.

In this section, I explore discriminatory colonial bordering laws experienced by British Indian seafarers employed on inferior contracts, which placed them in the racialized labor category of *lascar*. The classification of *lascar* secured through British parliamentary legislation and East India Company regulations and maintained through racializing discourses forced Indian seafarers into an employment category that ensured that they remained at the base of British Merchant Navy hierarchies (Visram, 2002). As well as denying *lascars* on board employment rights granted to white seafarers, the legislation excluded the *lascars*, who were British subjects, from the settlement in the UK. Public–private bordering partnerships between the British government, the East India Company, and later, the P&O, other shipping companies, and British unions worked throughout the period to ensure that south Asian seafarers embodied the border at sea, at the dockside, and inland.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the complex array of bordering techniques grew out of the economic priorities of shipping companies that strove to keep costs down by maintaining a segmented, racialized labor market with Indian and African seafarers segregated in the bottom rungs of a rigid hierarchy (Tabili, 1994; Visram, 2002; Ahuja, 2006; Ewald, 2013a,b). These combined with bordering processes associated with racially exclusive immigration laws in Britain, North America, and Australia so that at different times and in different spaces, multiple states, and privately administered bordering techniques were put in place attempting to "contain" the itinerant seafarers at ports of departure in India, at sea and ports of entry. In the following paragraphs, I explore these borderingscapes (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019) to show how they worked together to ensure that working-class Indian seafarers faced considerable barriers in settling in Britain, thereby producing their invisibility in national narratives and normalizing the view demonstrated in the previous section, that seafarers recruited from the Global South are not entitled to settle in the UK with their families.

3.1. *"Lascar"* contracts

Legislation that discriminated against African and Asian sailors on British ships existed since the 17th century (Davis, 2012, p. 136; Ewald, 2013b, p. 277; Fisher, 2004, pp. 32–42; Tabili, 1994; Visram, 2002, pp. 16–20). The 1823 Merchant Shipping Act exemplifies most clearly how bordering legislation, discourses, and practices worked together to discriminate against British Indian seafarers, racialized as *lascars* on board, in the docks, and beyond the docked ships

into local communities. The 1823 Act, not repealed until 1963, made official the employment category of *lascar*, which had been commonly used to label men from across south Asia employed on European-commanded ships. Seafarers recruited from very diverse areas were grouped into a single racialized category, employed on contracts that became known as "Lascar Articles." These contracts confirmed that diverse Indian seafarers, when lumped into the racialized homogeneous employment category of *lascar* were not British subjects and could only be discharged and paid off in India. The contracts also defined their working conditions, compelling them to work in inferior conditions for less pay (detailed in the following section). *Lascar* became a term of racist abuse in the English maritime language, described as the mobile equivalent of *coolie* (Balachandran, 2012). Any *lascar* convicted of vagrancy in Britain had to be repatriated by the East India Company. Ship captains who failed to report the arrival of *lascars* in Britain faced a fine, one-third paid to the informer, and two-thirds paid for the prosecution and maintenance of the "illegal immigrant" seafarer (Fisher, 2004, p. 176). What had started as a response to Indian requests to return home became institutionalized as forced deportation, facilitated by citizen border guards, intended to prevent them from becoming legal migrants.

As well as preventing settlement, the enshrining of the inferior racialized category of *lascar* into British maritime law ensured that the legal minimum standard of accommodation for Indian workers on board ships, their contractual position, and diet scales lagged far behind those of white seafarers (Visram, 2002, pp. 18–33). By the 1840s, the increased imperial trade and lobbying from steam shipping companies, most notably P&O which was dependent on Indian labor, contributed to the British Parliament redefining *lascars* as "British." This enabled ship owners to recruit more cheap labor, and P&O led the way in employing all-Indian crews on their steamships bound for Britain. With the increasing number of Indians arriving at British ports, the government passed further laws were passed denying British Indian seafarers settlement rights in Britain. The 1854 Merchant Shipping Act forced ship owners to pay a fine of £30 if any *lascar* was left behind in Britain. Numbers further increased after the 1869 opening of the Suez Canal (Tabili, 1994). The introduction of steamships created new segmented labor categories in the engine room, where half of all seafarers worked stoking the furnaces. From the 1850s, P&O began to recruit African crews from Indian Ocean ports. They were labeled as *seedies* and employed on inferior contracts in the stoke holes, where they overwhelmingly carried out the most dangerous role of trimming coal. The labor historian Janet Ewald argues that on P&O ships, African seafarers were segregated below the Indian seafarers into the "bottom layer of the racialized hierarchy" (Ewald, 2013b, p. 280). More *lascar* crew were employed for the equivalent number of Europeans; however, there remained a net gain for the shipping companies who argued that Indian and African workers were better suited to the excessive heat of the engine rooms. Arguments that Indian crews were unsuited to colder climates were used to justify paying them less despite their working on north Atlantic routes (Visram, 2002, pp. 55–56; Balachandran, 2016). As P&O grew, it became increasingly integral to the expanding empire, carrying its cargo, passengers, and government-subsidized mail between Indian, Asian, and Australian ports. The company became the largest single employer of Indian crews whom it recruited *via* networks reaching inland from its Bombay (Mumbai) terminus across the west of the subcontinent.

In the east of India, The British India Steam Navigation Company (BISN) employed the second-highest number of Indian crewmen whom they recruited inland from networks centered in Calcutta (Kolkata) (Ewald, 2013b, p. 278). Notably, 100% of *lascar* crews were common on routes east of the Cape of Good Hope, and by the 1880s P&O was "almost wholly dependent" on them (Balachandran, 2016, p. 198).

In the later decades of the British Empire, there were continuing tensions between the "mobility" and "containment" of British Indian subjects who were moving around the empire as indentured laborers, military personnel, and seafarers (Ahuja, 2006). The seafarers were the most mobile and the hardest to monitor and contain. Steamships spent less time in dock than sailing vessels, and British Indian crew were not always allowed to land. The metropolitan response to their increased mobility reinforced the existing "tiered arrangements of racialized biopolitical borders" reaching into ships and foreign ports' (Balachandran, 2016, p. 188). The 1894 Merchant Shipping Act bound them to return to India by giving shipowners powers to place them on vessels heading back to India even without work, and Indian seafarers who deserted faced criminal prosecution (Fisher, 2004; Balachandran, 2012, p. 385; Visram, 2002, p. 56). Bordering technologies constructed to "contain" the Indian mobile labor force and prevent desertions and the settlement of working-class Indian men in the metropolis and white settler colonies mean that there is little material or discursive evidence of their time on land.

Multilayered partnerships between employers, unions, and compatriots made up the everyday practice of bordering legislation in different colonial contexts. At different periods, shipping companies made decisions about whom they employed based on contemporary racialized stereotypes and links with diverse local networks they had built up in specific localities. In the early 20th century P&O preferred Muslims from Punjab to work in the engines, deckhands from Gujarat, and Christian stewards from Goa, while the Clan steamship Company chose crew from Sylhet recruited in Kolkata (Ahuja, 2006, p. 130). Access to the ships and ensuing mobility reached inland to villages and households as influential crew members—the *serangs* (boatswain)—recruited *via* their own networks. *Serangs* also controlled the lives of seafarers on board through bonds of debt that reached back to villages. Their own dependence on the white officers and financial obligations meant that it was in their interests to ensure that Indian seafarers were kept under surveillance when anchored in docks and caught and punished if they attempted to cross the dockside border by deserting (Adams, 1987; Ahuja, 2006, p. 136; Balachandran, 2016, p. 198).

P&O took over its rival BISN in 1914. In the same year, Indian seafarers were estimated to number 51,000 men, forming 17.5% of the crew employed on British registered ships, servicing the Indian Ocean and international trade routes, including to Australia and Britain. The 1823 Indian Merchant Shipping Act, still in place, ensured that their conditions of labor remained inferior to that of British seafarers. Per month, Indian crew earned less than a quarter of that earned by white British crewmembers for equivalent work and were allocated just over half the living space of European sailors (Visram, 2002, pp. 54–55; Balachandran, 2016, p. 198). Indian men continued to be employed in large numbers during the First World War as white seafarers were recruited onto Royal Navy ships and, by 1919, formed 20% of the British maritime labor force, and by 1939, they made up over a quarter.

Indian seafarers resisted poor conditions and cruelty through deserting ships when possible while governments and shipping companies sought to prevent them from legally migrating to and settling in Britain or elsewhere in its white settler colonies (cf. Adams, 1987; Choudhury, 1993, 1995; Visram, 2002; Fisher, 2004; Balachandran, 2012, 2016; Manjrekar, 2019). In the following section, I explore the onshore bordering discourses and practices that sought to prevent their desertion, migration, and settlement.

4. Section three: Bordering seafarers onshore

In the days of sail, seafarers would spend several months in the port areas before obtaining a return voyage, and many became destitute and "illegal" on the streets of London. The East India Company (EIC) was obliged to house Indian seafarers in barracks near the ports or privately run boarding houses since they were prohibited from terminating their contracts anywhere outside of British India. Indian, African, Chinese, and Caribbean seafarers were targets of racist attacks and abuses throughout the 19th and early years of the 20th centuries (Visram, 2002; Fisher, 2004). In 1816, the EIC had recommended confining south Asian seafarers to "hulks" moored in the Thames to protect Britons from what they described as the "depravity" of their character (Fisher, 2004, pp. 173–174). The idea for the offshoring of racialized colonial subjects was a development of 18th-century government policy whereby old ships had been used to house convicts waiting to be transported or forced into hard labor locally. Floating on the Thames at Woolwich or elsewhere, hulks ensured the isolation of the prisoners from family and friends. The living conditions contributed to high levels of illness and death (PortCities, 2010). However, the EIC continued to confine Indian seafarers in barracks near the docks, and as I discuss later, the idea of using a hulk for housing re-emerged in reference to P&O in 1922.

In reference to the later era of steamships, Balachandran drew on Agamben (1995) in likening ships to "camps"—spaces of confinement and exception where states and private employers exercise "extraordinary power" over racialized seafarers (2016, p. 188). When ships run by P&O or their British rivals docked in ports across the British Empire, Indian seafarers were often not allowed to land, or if they did so, they were confined to warehouses or boarding houses discussed later. However, while state laws and economic disparities structured the lives of colonial subjects from recruitment in Indian villages through voyages and dockside barracks, the lived experiences of Indian seafarers resembled more the *campzenship* outlined by Sigona (2015) than the camp. In Sigona's 2015 conception, *campzenship* is a situated form of membership produced by the camp which accommodates the complexity of social relations in and around the camps through the resident's everyday interactions and practices with authorities and each other, reshaping rights, entitlements, and obligations. Rare oral histories of seafarers show how the on board voyages and dockside changeovers should be seen as elements of a continuum of littoral working lives (Wemyss, 2011). The Indian seafarers, although legally bound by their inferior contracts, negotiated their everyday lives in dialog with ships officers, *serangs*, accommodation officers, and boarding house owners, as well as networks that included compatriots and wives, parents, and

extended family onshore on different continents or working on other ships (Adams, 1987; Gardezi, 1989; Choudhury, 1993, 1995).

What was referred to in shipping company and government discourses as "desertion" or "jumping ship" was effectively an attempt to cross the border and control the shipping companies. Seafarers outwitted officers when they moved illegally from ship to land or from the barracks or boarding houses where they were obliged to wait out their time. Especially during the war and post-war decades, they were actively recruited and employed illegally by onshore businesses. From the mid-1920s, despite the extension of maritime laws that required shipping companies to track down and prosecute British Indian "deserters," only P&O did so because their trade, predominantly with Asia, depended to a greater extent on the low-waged "Lascar Articled" labor force. Other companies with more North Atlantic trade ignored desertions if they suited them economically (Balachandran, 2012, pp. 181–184).

In addition to the financial interests of rival shipping companies, the racially discriminatory maritime and immigration laws, and the different backgrounds of the crews themselves, the bordering processes that limited the mobility and strengthened the containment of colonial crews were contingent on the politics of the British seafaring unions locally and globally (Balachandran, 2016, p. 196). The public–private bordering partnerships were, for different reasons, supported by white seafarers' unions. Throughout the years of the empire, stereotyped views of Indian seafarers were mobilized by ship owners, captains, and unions. Their abstention from alcohol was seen as an advantage by officers, contrasted with what they saw as the "drunkenness and absence without leave" of white employees. The racialized inferior category of *lascar* was associated with lacking masculinity and initiative. Constructions of the "docility" were produced through the racialized political and economic relations of empire and the domination on the ship and on land where the ship's officers were empowered to wield control over every aspect of their lives. These racist constructions were used by shipping companies to justify their inferior conditions of employment (Visram, 2002; Ahuja, 2006). Even the pensions of Indian seafarers were bordered in favor of British residents. They did not receive pensions because although ship owners, under the 1911 National Insurance Act, were obliged to contribute to a pension fund for "*lascars*," seafarers who did not live in Britain were excluded from receiving the pension. Instead, white ex-seamen benefitted from the payments (Visram, 2002, pp. 55 and 225–226).

Before the First World War, British seafarer's unions supported a range of bordering techniques to prevent the employment of "foreign labor." Union leaders used racializing and emotive language in their opposition to the recruitment of un-unionized colonial labor whom they represented as depriving white seafarers of work and better conditions. While those racialized as Chinese were the main target, other groups of racialized seafarers were included in the vilification and demands. Using a discourse of on board safety and "race neutrality," the president of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (NSFU) demanded that Indian and Chinese seafarers should be fluent in English. This was clearly not needed since the labor categories on board steamships, described in the previous section, were well known to be segmented and controlled by the *serang* intermediaries. Racialized seafarers were regularly targeted as being the cause of the bad conditions of white seafarers. In 1911, the chairman of the Clyde branch of the National Transport Workers' Federation (NTWF) argued that Chinese and Indian seafarers "lowered the standard of life for white men" struggled for by the unions and threatened that it the "Chinese Invasion" continued, "the workers would have one of the biggest fights that the country has ever known." In the same year, while in London, NTWF leader Ben Tillett complained that the shipping companies had "engaged all possible Asiatics and foreigners including negroes" forcing white crews out (Visram, 2002, pp. 57–58). By 1913, the NFSU leadership had "abandoned any pretense of inter-racial solidarity" to campaign for the complete exclusion of Chinese seafarers from British ships (Tabili, 1994, p. 88). In the case of Indian seafarers, the shipping companies wanted to avoid aggravating white seafarer's unions in both the UK and Australia where at a different time the unions had taken P&O to court over employing "colored" seamen. Whether constructing Indian seafarers as threats or victims, the actions of the white unions supported their respective governments' efforts to stop working-class Indian men from coming ashore and settling in the growing cosmopolitan dockside communities (Goodall et al., 2008, pp. 56–57).

4.1. Negotiating bordering at the dockside

The memoirs of Dada Amir Haider Khan, who worked as a seafarer during the First World War, counter the one-dimensional constructions of Indian men who were compelled to stay on board or in approved lodgings when they arrived in British ports. Arriving on the P&O Steamship, the SS Khiva in the Royal Victoria Docks in the winter of 1917–1918 Khan wrote of leaving the ship and docks to visit acquaintances who were living and working onshore. In doing this, Khan and his friends were "illegal border-crossers." During and after the First World War, Indian seafarers were recruited and illegally employed by businesses such as Tate&Lyle located near the docks. Khan also gives an idea of the P&O accommodation and security arrangements for Indian seafarers:

> I encountered a former shipmate of my senior brother whom I knew from Bombay. He was residing in a working class locality of London where he was employed in some factory. A few times he took me to his lodging house and other places where the working people lived … After taking some additional men from the reserve which the P&O kept near the docks, and having our photographs taken for identification cards, the S.S. Khiva crawled out of her mooring place in January 1918 (Gardezi, 1989, p. 120).

Khan deserted the ship at the end of that voyage in New York, quickly obtained naturalization papers, and got recruited onto an American ship with better conditions and freedom to leave the vessel when it docked in Liverpool 2 months later. However, he remained conscious of the risks faced by Indian seafarers crossing the border when he visited the P&O ship he had previously deserted when it returned to New York:

> We purchased some fruit and accompanied these men to visit the rest of our shipmates and friends … it was daring on our part to board a ship that we had escaped from illegally a short time earlier. But the *serang* would not have detained us forcibly in the presence of so many of our friends (Gardezi, 1989, p. 133).

Khan's memoirs hint at the interactions and negotiations among seafarers, *serang*, white officers, and dockside populations that are invisible in most official and unofficial archived material. He recalled that men on board had been able to tell people from his village and his mother that he was in good condition after deserting (*ibid*). Imperial bordering laws were not the impermeable mechanisms of control represented by governments.

In 1919, riots in port areas of the UK were started by local white populations who attacked people and property of the mixed neighborhoods, blaming African and Asian laborers for the lack of employment during the economic downturn (Tabili, 1994). The government's response was the 1919 Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act that ordered preference be given to British crews, assumed to be white, and the deportation of "destitute colored seamen." Despite being officially categorized as British subjects and not "Aliens" Indian seafarers often had no documentary proof of their status, and many were deported alongside seafarers from different areas of Africa and the Caribbean (Ahuja, 2006).

During this period, onshore accommodation of seafarers was associated with an array of state-bordering practices. The case of the 1922 surprise inspection of official and unofficial lodgings in dock areas of east London illustrates how these practices were aimed at preventing desertion, avoiding racial conflict that would have a negative impact on public opinion in India (thus preserving the ideology of imperial superiority), protecting profits of the shipping companies, or a combination of all of the above (Tabili, 1994, pp. 59–65; Balachandran, 2016, p. 198). The inspection party consisted of MPs led by Earl Winterton (the Parliamentary Secretary to the India Office), a missionary employed by the Port of London, and representatives from the LCC. The inspection included the relatively expensive "racially segregated" Strangers Home for Asiatics, Africans, and South Sea Islanders (favored by the government representatives and the LCC); the house of Choy Sing in Poplar and other unlicensed "common lodging houses" suspected of housing Indian seafarers with Chinese seafarers; and the P&O managed "hulk" in the Royal Albert Dock (possibly the place where the P&O kept their "reserve" referred to by Dada Amir Haider Khan earlier). Unlike the common lodging houses, which the inspection party saw as actively encouraging seafarers to find work onshore or enlist elsewhere on better-paid British Articles, the isolated dockside location of the P&O "hulk" made desertions hard. The location also meant that while the London County Council (LCC) had the authority to inspect and license boarding houses, they had no authority over the "hulk." This was the main concern of Dr. Kay Menzies of the London County Council (LCC) Health Inspectorate:

> I have reason to believe that this accommodation consists of an old hulk in the Royal Albert Docks. It is under the supervision of the Port of London Sanitary Authority and is therefore outside our jurisdiction and cannot be inspected by any member of our staff. I am given to understand therefore that this hulk is an "abomination" and a byword in the Dock neighborhood for filthiness and unsuitability… [L/E/7/1152, 1922, Kay Menzies to Cobb, 15 June 1922].

P&O gave permission for the party to visit the "hulk," after which it was referred to as a shed in the resulting report and communication. It was reported that P&O called it a *godown* (a word

used for a warehouse in parts of Asia)—suggesting perhaps that its isolation had led to the rumor of a floating "hulk" (Winterton to Peel 4 December 1922 L/E/7/1152). Floating or not, the inspection report confirmed that conditions were "unsatisfactory in every detail," dirty, badly heated, no proper cooking arrangements, and insufficient space (Segrave Report, 1 December 1922 L/E/7/1152). Not wanting to antagonize the shipping company, the India Office sent P&O private communications about the "disgraceful" quarters, to which its directors responded that they were already planning to demolish them (Communications between Peel and Shaw 1–11 January 1923 L/E/7/1152).

A conference to discuss the government's response to a forthcoming parliamentary question about "*lascar* accommodation" following the inspection made suggestions that aimed to develop the bordering roles and partnerships between owners of lodging houses, the LCC, the India Office, and shipping companies. The first suggestion to prevent desertions was that the LCC should introduce regulations to compel lodging housekeepers to report to the India Office within 24 h of the arrival of any Indian seafarer, their name, the name of their ship, and the reason for leaving their ship. Another was to follow Australia and Canada in legislating for shipowners to be fined for every Indian desertion. A further suggestion to avoid "racial disturbances" was to house Indian seafarers separately from others (Conference on Lascar Accommodation, 8 December 1922. L/E/7/1152).

Bordering discourses of Conservative and Labor MPs who took part in the parliamentary discussion on *lascar* accommodation also worked to exclude and silence the experiences of Indian seafarers in the UK. In responding to the question on *lascar* accommodation, the Conservative MP, Earl Winterton, said that he had been part of the inspection, but he shared none of the details that would have alerted others to the appalling living conditions of working-class British Indian men. He said that he "had come to the conclusion that there is room for considerable improvement in certain cases" (Hansard, 1922). Manny Shinwell, Labour MP, and former activist in the British Seafarers' Union (BSU) showed no interest in knowing more about those conditions as he switched the focus to the accommodation of white seafarers and ways to prevent British Indian seafarers from landing in Britain:

> Will the Department at the same time inquire into the housing accommodation provided for white seamen in various ports of this country? Cannot steps be taken to prevent crews being shipped on vessels to be paid off at British ports so that they shall not be discharged in this country? (Hansard, 1922).

In the following decade, the situation for racialized seafarers deteriorated further with legislation including the explicitly racist 1925 Colored Alien Seamen Order that required "colored seamen" to register with the police and be deported if "destitute." African and Caribbean men, Goan Christian seafarers who were not categorized as British Indian and British Indian crew without papers that proved their status as British subjects were deported (Ahuja, 2006). However, many men successfully escaped the ships and "Lascar Articles," using growing Indian networks in port cities to find work on land and ways to get employed back onto ships on British Articles, giving them better conditions than the European crew. During the Second World War, British Indians continued to be the subjects of surveillance as both state and non-state actors took on

bordering roles around the docks and inland. The National Union of Seamen and port authorities "sought closer watch on Asian boarding house keepers to check desertions" and "any constable or military officer" was empowered to "arrest an Indian on mere suspicion of desertion" (Balachandran, 2012, pp. 186–187, see also Visram, 2002; Ahuja, 2006). Bordering discourses and practices meant that the UK border continued to be wherever an Indian seafarer was onshore. In the context of 21st-century global coloniality, their male and female descendants, together with seafarers recruited elsewhere in the Global South, remain targets of embodied bordering discourses and practices.

5. Conclusion: Embodied bordering

This study is a partial response to the question of whether seafarers, recruited from the Global South and working between British and European ports but prohibited from settling in the UK, should be considered "migrants." I have argued that the normalization of the view that they are not "migrants" is due to the accumulation, since the early years of British colonialism, of racially discriminatory maritime legislation, everyday bordering practices, and discourses that forced racialized seafarers to embody the border.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, British imperial legislation aimed to make British borders differentially permeable to British subjects and those categorized as "aliens." Indian men, racialized and class-defined through the labor category of *lascar* were targeted as undesirable migrants. The British border was never impermeable to British Indian working-class seafarers. However, by making it illegal to leave their ships and compelling them to initially live and work without documents, the bordering legislation forced them to hide from officials and private individuals, further making them and their families invisible as migrants. Immigration laws combined with maritime legislation produced and maintained the cultural whiteness of the metropole and settler colonies. In dialog with the legislation, bordering discourses worked to exclude and silence the voices of men recruited from coastal and inland colonized India but whose lives were spent crossing oceans between empire ports and elsewhere. More invisible still were the lives and voices of their families in India, while ideologies of racial purity stigmatized their families in Britain.

Bordering legislation and practices from 150 years ago constitute the power relations of coloniality that structure lives today. The proliferation of the differential bordering of bodies continues to be central to national and global operations of neoliberal globalization. In 2022, dominant political and media discourses mostly ignore the everyday lives of agency seafarers recruited from the Global South. However, the contracts they work under construct them, including those working on P&O Ferries in British waters, as potential "illegal migrants." Empire-era bordering legislation and bordering discourses have normalized the conditions of living unseen and unheard on board for 6-month stretches,

on low pay, away from families, and yet constructed as part of the "family" of the DT World conglomerate. As in the case of British Indian seafarers, the racialization of "foreign agency" crew ensures that they embody the border on sea and onshore.

In centering racialized bordering discourses and partnerships between government and private companies on ships, at the border-crossing spaces of UK docks and onshore, I am arguing for a deeper awareness of and further sociological research into the histories of marginalization, objectification, and physical containment of racialized maritime laborers. Along with swathes of bordering legislation across the empire, the public/private partnerships between the colonial governments and shipping companies constitute the long history of the UK's so-called "hostile environment" immigration policies whereby everyday bordering discourses and practices that have drawn ordinary citizens into border-guard roles, continue to target racialized working-class men and women (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). In the present-day UK, everyday bordering materially and culturally reproduces exclusionary imaginations of Britishness and, as such, are enduring components of global coloniality.

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Governing policies and factors affecting the labor market integration of female accompanying spouses

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Introduction: This study sought to ascertain the macro governing policies and factors that influence the integration of female accompanying spouses in the Free State, into the South African labor market.

Methods: Utilizing a qualitative approach, thirteen one-on-one interviews, consisting of an initial purposive sample and a subsequent snowball sample, were conducted for data gathering. The study employed thematic analysis to interpret the data.

Results: The findings revealed that governing policies emerging from South Africa's migration legislation, and factors such as spouse dependence, reinforcement of traditional gender roles, and restrictive employment legislation which forced deskilling of qualifications, mainly impacted the conduct of accompanying spouses concerning the labor market.

Discussion: This study contributes to the literature on labor market integration (LMI) from an underexplored South-to-South standpoint by delving into the experiences of skilled female migrants in the family migration setting. A neglected facet of Michel Foucault's governmentality theory was used to investigate the labor market assimilation needs of female accompanying spouses. The study's qualitative approach renders the findings much less generalizable than a quantitative inquiry. It is important to note that LMI research is considerably setting-specific, despite some aspects of this study being applicable to other settings in the Global South. South Africa continues to be a pivotal regional hub for migration in the Global South, yet it has a complex migration governance framework that sets up a specific, while broadly exclusionary, macro context for accompanying spouses. This study zones in on issues that could inform more effective family migration policy.

1. Introduction

Labor migration has pervaded South Africa's economy for several decades. A fairly steady economy, political stability and a considerable respect for human rights are some of the key aspects contributing promoting post-apartheid South Africa as a pivotal regional migration hub and a favored destination for numerous labor migrants. Notwithstanding, the migration governance framework in South Africa has been criticized for being contentious and contradictory, as substantiated by related policies that are both inclusive and constricting (Amit and Kriga, 2014; Van Lennep, 2019). Although the positive role of migrants within the South African economy is evident [The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development-International Labor Organization (OECD/ILO), 2018a, Vermaak and Muller, 2019], widespread misconceptions prevail about migrants "stealing" the jobs of South Africans, placing unnecessary strain on public services, and participating in unlawful activities (Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013; Amit and Kriga, 2014; Kanayo et al., 2019). For several years now, South Africa has leveraged its migration policies to deal with challenges regarding labor shortages and to manage the available labor pool. Post-2000, the country adopted a skills-based immigration policy to facilitate skilled migration while increasing semi-skilled or unskilled restrictions. However, policies centered on economic development are broadly criticized for failing to account for the complexities associated with family migration (Holliday et al., 2019).

Women who migrate within the context of family as accompanying spouses often suffer the migration consequences to the greatest extent (Ballarino and Panichella, 2017). Many of them can be regarded as economic or skilled migrants, with aspirations to be integrated into the labor market (Riaño, 2016). Consequently, accompanying spouses seeking employment are subjected to navigating a complex array of policies, regulations, practices, and narratives of labor migration, which inevitably frames, shapes, and controls their behavior regarding the labor market in South Africa. Additionally, accompanying spouses continue to be fundamentally invisible in migration studies and the prevailing gender inequalities in migration research are mostly to the disadvantage of women. For instance, Brieger and Gielnik (2021) found that female migrants are less likely to start or run their own businesses than their male counterparts, and female accompanying spouses often prioritized entrepreneurship in host countries due to their limited labor market integration (LMI) prospects compared to male migrants. ILO (2016) and the Gereke et al. (2020) further reveal how female migrants constitute about half of international migration worldwide, yet the character of female migration has not changed much since the beginning of the era of mass global migration because data systems are gender-blind, mostly in favor of men. The ILO (2016) also suggest how women largely work in "invisible" sectors and do not enjoy the same labor legislative protection as their male counterparts

do. It is therefore imperative for research to be undertaken to unearth various LMI inhibiting factors which could possibly be considered when drafting and amending labor migration policy in the host country.

The theory of governmentality by Michel Foucault was adopted in this research. In *Security, Territory and Population*, Foucault (1978) coined governmentality as the conduct of conduct. Governing involves the use of vast techniques, practices, narratives, or strategies to model and adjust people's behavior toward specific outcomes (Lemke, 2002; Korteweg, 2017). Such techniques are crafted through mentalities or thoughts (governmentalities) which presuppose that conduct is deliberately shaped rather than randomly or arbitrarily. Rajas (2012) posits that governmentality proffers the notion that some ways of being are better to others. Thus, governmentality functions through the shaping of the subjectivities of those being governed. Certain personal subjectivities are because of specific knowledges that determine possibilities (Ho, 2017). For instance, in South Africa, the legal label of "dependent" assigned to accompanying spouses influences their ability to work legally. Consequently, governmental rationalities can be broadened into individual lives and society at large (Rajas, 2012). From a Foucauldian standpoint, power is re-crafted as power *from afar* that entails the shaping of behaviors, aspirations, values, and education preferences. In relation to this, the exercise of power is observable through the voluntary behavior of the one being governed (Del Percio, 2018).

Migration in the Global South remains under-researched (Bastia and Piper, 2019; Gisselquist and Tarp, 2019) and there are proven gaps in the literature particularly concerning migration by skilled female labor. Most research investigating and exploring the experiences of immigrant women has mostly placed emphasis on women who are socio-economically disadvantaged, specifically, refugees or those seeking asylum status, as well as unskilled and semi-skilled migrants, as a result, there is a dearth of research on skilled women migrants (Kaushik and Walsh, 2018). The purpose of this research was to ascertain the macro governing policies and factors influencing the integration of accompanying spouses by deconstructing the experiences of specifically skilled female accompanying spouses concerning LMI in South Africa. The study specifically considered the perspectives of accompanying spouses in the Free State province.

2. A brief literature review

2.1. Governmentality and migration policy in South Africa

Michel Foucault is considered as one of the leading scholars who highlighted the techniques and strategies of power, specifically, how power is exercised. Regarding

governmentality, Foucault denotes structured attitudes, applications and rationalities through which individuals, or structures are governed (Foucault, 1978). Governmentality is framed as the "conduct of conduct" [(Foucault, 1978), p. 220–1], which oscillates between "governing self to governing others." It denotes any effort to craft behavior in line with a particular assortment of norms and for various outcomes through considerable forethought and consideration (Lemke, 2012).

Immigration centers on biopolitical rationalities that are primarily associated with the management of the cross-border movements of migrants. In this regard, South Africa places a strong emphasis on the notion of "sovereignty" which is regarded as the right to determine who and who is not eligible to pass through its borders (Department of Home Affairs, 2017). In line with economic development goals, there has been a concerted effort to enable the mobility of exceptionally skilled and qualified people into South Africa. Rajas (2012) argues that it is not sufficient to consider biopolitical rationalities alone: those that concern the management of the integration of migrants into society must also be considered. Due to the inextricable and enduring bond between labor and migration policies in South Africa, one could argue that the rationalities that impact cross border mobility equally affect the LMI of migrants (Ala-mantila and Fleischmann, 2018). Governmentalities find expression in aspects such as policy frameworks that directly impact migrant outcomes as they determine what opportunities may be available for migrants to capitalize on in the host country (Bhattacharjee, 2017).

Beginning in the colonial era right through to that of post-independence, the regulation of cross border control in South Africa was fueled by segregationist and exclusionary rationalities. Racially discriminatory practices characterized labor migration (Statistics South Africa, 2018), which ensured continued domination by colonizers and an abundant quota of cheap labor migrants (Department of Home Affairs, 2016). Migrants, particularly those of African descent, continue to be subjected to different forms of prejudice, discrimination and even violence. Korteweg (2017) note that even institutions (including workplaces) became sites of exclusion under xenophobia. With greater acceptance of the role that skilled migration could play in development, South Africa began to open the borders to Africans and the world but with the important caveat of reserving the right of entry mainly to highly skilled immigrants or those with critical skills (Department of Home Affairs, 2016). Those from the South African Development Community (SADC), regarded as having low to mid-level skills, could only work on farms, mines, and other companies under a temporary Corporate Work Visa (Department of Home Affairs, 2016).

The Draft Green Paper for International Migration signified a significant shift in policy rationale. A memorandum of understanding between the government of South Africa and the Southern African Development Community and the UN High Commission for Refugees culminated in a more open, rights-based approach to migrants and refugees (Amit and Kriga, 2014). The 1998 Refugees Act and the subsequent 2002 Immigration Act heralded a new era of migration policy. Though strong views continued around undesirable, unauthorized immigration, immigration was cast in a more favorable light as having the potential to be a tool for nation-building instead of being an impediment.

Eradicating xenophobia was an explicit goal of the 2002 Immigration Act and its subsequent amendment in 2004. However, no specific tools were at the time introduced to that end (Facchini et al., 2013). The country's socio-economic problems and the high crime and unemployment rates were attributed to low-skilled African migrants. As a result, barriers to low-skilled migration were entrenched around perceptions of risk and burden (Mbiyozo, 2018). Consequently, restrictive migration policies have featured alongside efforts to manage migration through expanding documentation (Amit and Kriga, 2014). But, as highlighted by Amit and Kriga (2014), the DHA has continually undermined documentation as part of migration management strategy, which has impacted on skilled migrants as well.

Van Lennep (2019) outlines key issues emerging from the Department of Home Affairs (2017) White Paper for International Migration. First, it acknowledges the challenge around attracting and retaining skilled migrants and therefore seeks to ensure skilled migration. Secondly, it prominently features the securitization of migration, which is encapsulated in the need to safeguard "sovereignty, public safety and national security" and a risk-based approach (Department of Home Affairs, 2017). This is evidenced through stricter visa rules for travelers from the African continent and stricter border controls (Abebe, 2019). Thirdly, it establishes, at least outwardly, a pro-African stance. Fourthly, at the expense of newcomers' rights, it enforces control, temporality, and deterrence and, lastly, it expands protectionist measures mainly centered on the integration of migrants.

Though a major destination for migrant laborers entering from the greater African region and beyond, South Africa continues to be characterized by contrasts and contradictions in governmentalities, translating into ambivalent and shifting policies and practices. However, official rhetoric has not always translated into practice. This applies to skilled migration where negative views of migration for skills development continue to persist despite a chronic skills shortage. Policies are key to creating opportunities for accompanying spouses, and this also pertains to LMI (Confurius et al., 2019).

2.2. Governmentality and labor market integration

LMI confers numerous benefits for the migrant that are particularly important for females, including economic self-sufficiency and improved socio-economic status (Korteweg, 2017). It can offer a means for accompanying spouses to become less reliant on their spouses, which is especially important in the context of domestic violence (Hiralal, 2017). LMI is also a source of social integration, which shapes the individual's perception of herself as a resource for social identity (Røysum, 2020). LMI can essentially create spaces in which female migrants can be empowered and through which they can achieve modes of being. Research shows that unsuccessful LMI can engender feelings of isolation, alienation, disadvantage or even ignorance of female migrants (Confurius et al., 2019). Critically, LMI is an important source of integration as it is the gateway to other imperative domains of integration such as health, housing, and education. Power relations, however, play an important role around shaping the integration of migrants into the labor market.

This research consulted the governmentality theory to explore the association between the microphysics and the macrophysics of power that influence the labor market outcomes of accompanying spouses within the South African context. Importantly, this research recognizes migrant women as protagonists of their own experiences in tackling the prevalent migration notions that affect them and appropriating them in a manner that is fair and advantageous to their own lives. The governmentality theory has been adapted to different settings, including informal settlements (Massey, 2014), headscarf matters (Teo, 2019), breastfeeding (Malatzky, 2017), and language training policies (Haque, 2017). Within the LMI setting, labor market experiences are the result of conduct of conduct as defined by the theory of governmentality, which produces various subjectivities, particularly during a time when anti-foreign sentiment continues to rise in South Africa (Tshikalange, 2022; Zulu, 2022). This study focused on the conduct of conduct of female accompanying spouses in the Free State, South Africa.

2.3. The South African labor market and labor market integration

Labor market assimilation by skilled migrants is based on various preconditions, including labor market conditions and the legislative regulations controlling the labor market (Föbker, 2019). Labor market circumstances differ among nations and regions and can be broadly categorized into two specific groups: (i) adaptable (uncoordinated) and (ii) rigid or inflexible (coordinated). Inflexible markets, such as those found in countries like France, Germany, and the Netherlands, are characterized by strict employment protection legislation (Grigoleit-Richter, 2017; Confurius et al., 2019). In these labor markets, migrants tend to be over-represented as unemployed outsiders due to employers' reluctance to hire unskilled workers (Ballarino and Panichella, 2017; Kesler and Safi, 2018). Kesler and Safi (2018) found that despite the more flexible labor markets in the United Kingdom (UK), Spain and Italy, there tend to be higher earning gaps in these countries due to inequality among migrants employed in high and low service jobs.

The labor market in South Africa can be characterized as rigid (Beukes et al., 2016), considering the stringent employment legislation that governs it. Pertaining to the hiring of immigrants, the Immigration Act (13 of 2002), Section 38(1) stipulates that "no person shall employ (b) a foreigner whose status does not authorize them to be employed by such person, nor (c) a foreigner on terms, conditions or in a capacity different from those contemplated in such foreigner's status" (Department of Home Affairs, 2002). Factors which inhibit employers from hiring immigrants without valid permits or visas include the consequence of fines or possible imprisonment. Authors such as Chinyakata et al. (2019) highlight that the Immigration Act (No. 13 of 2002) contributes to the discrimination faced by immigrants. Strict requirements for the application for a general work permit must include evidence of employment and other documents that justify the selection of migrants over a South African citizen (Department of Home Affairs, 2016).

The primary barrier to LMI for accompanying spouses to South Africa is linked to their visa status. Skilled migrants entering South Africa for work-related purposes are eligible for several visa types, including intracompany visas, permanent residence permits or visas, visas for those in possession of critical skills, and visas for those categorized as general workers who are not considered critical skilled labor. However, their accompanying spouses are allocated either a spousal or dependent visa which does not allow them to work in South Africa (Department of Home Affairs, 2002), thus hindering them from LMI in the host country. The critical skills list, which was adopted in the 2014 Immigration Regulations, outlines the professions that qualify one to obtain a critical skills visa. However, most of the skills regarded as critical and essential are considered male-oriented (Mbiyozo, 2018).

Migrants with foreign skills must submit their qualifications for evaluation by the South Africa Qualifications Authority (2017) so that equivalence can be made against South African standards. Many female migrants, however, are unable to transfer their skills to South Africa (Mbiyozo, 2018). Deemed unskilled, these migrants' ability to integrate into the job market is severely curtailed, and many resort to employment that is below their education or skills levels. Depending on one's occupational niche, the SAQA evaluation may need to be followed up with registration with the relevant professional body

like the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) or the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), among others (Wojczewski et al., 2015).

On the other hand, South Africa's labor market is characterized by a chronic shortage of skills that has been attributed to poor job growth and economic development. The shortage of skilled workers in South Africa is attributed to a significant brain drain of skilled nationals to countries such as Australia, the UK, Canada, New Zealand, and Germany (Mateus et al., 2014; Phan et al., 2015; Grigoleit-Richter, 2017). The country also faces a huge unemployment challenge, largely attributed to increasing labor market participation but limited generation of employment opportunities, which has seen the unemployment rate soar (Vermaak and Muller, 2019).

South Africa has a gendered labor market that restricts women to certain occupations (Grigoleit-Richter, 2017; Agatiello and Humer, 2018). Statistics South Africa (2018) shows how there is a strong representation of migrant women working in the domestic sector in South Africa, where one out of four female immigrants are employed as domestic workers, even though many of them could be regarded as well educated. Overall, research regarding labor market participation implies better prospects of employment for immigrants than locals, but this not necessarily entails full labor integration (Korteweg, 2017; Vermaak and Muller, 2019), as immigrants are less likely to be employed in work categorized as decent (Statistics South Africa, 2018). The OECD/ILO (2018a) notes growing trends of overqualification both among natives and migrants, and this suggests potential challenges around underemployment among both groups.

Negative attitudes and the racialization of African migrants and othering based on ethnicity or nation of origin are commonplace in South Africa (Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013). Mbiyozo (2018) stresses that the most marginalized and vulnerable African woman migrants in South Africa typically face a triple penalty because of racism, misogyny, and xenophobia. They are often confronted with social exclusion, open hostility, violence, and socioeconomic exploitation [South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), 2008; Hiralal, 2017; Mbiyozo, 2018; Chinyakata et al., 2019], thus imposing barriers to LMI.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research approach and philosophy

The study used a qualitative approach to obtain profound perspectives of the reality and understanding of the world from the standpoint of the participants. This approach was considered as pertinent to understanding firsthand experiences of the participants from an intersectional perspective. The qualitative case study research design used in this research intended

to address the subsequent research question: What are the macro governing policies and factors influencing accompanying spouses in the Free State provinces' integration into the South African labor market? This research was conducted in the South African labor market setting, zoning in on the perspectives of accompanying spouses who were based in the Free State province during the period when the study was conducted. The participants were female accompanying spouses who sought LMI in South Africa at the time. These participants originated from other African nations and migrated to South Africa through family (with their male spouses as lead migrants).

Our ontological stance was to scrutinize the dispositions and opinions of participants that expressed perspectives about their reality. We considered these viewpoints from the interviews that were conducted with the participants (Saunders et al., 2016). We explored and explained the understanding of what is interpreted as the nature of reality by the participants in terms of their everyday lives (Ngulube, 2020). Our epistemological stance was to recognize the place that narratives and individual perceptions hold in the phenomenon of coping with life as an accompanying spouse.

An interpretivist research paradigm was followed in generating knowledge, by uncovering meanings associated with the social phenomenon being explored (Saunders et al., 2016). Knowledge concerning the research phenomenon was founded on the interaction between us and the participants, leading to the emergence of assumptions and themes.

3.2. Research population and sampling

Thirteen (13) interviews were conducted in this research. This adhered to the Braun and Clarke's (2021b) suggestions regarding a sufficient qualitative sample size. This study further adopted these scholars' disposition that qualitative studies should place a greater emphasis on the profoundness of the insights gathered rather than on the numbers incorporated in the data collection and analysis processes, as is typically the case with quantitative studies. Thus, we strove to ensure a substantive breadth and depth in terms of the richness of the data collected during the interviews conducted with each participant. It is important to note that while conducting more interviews may have further broadened the scope of the research findings, time and budgetary constraints associated with the fulfillment of the requirements of a graduate qualification prevented this prospect. Additionally, because data was collected during a period when the COVID-19 pandemic still posed a noteworthy threat in the region, a few participants either postponed their appointments, or withdrew completely from the study, which in fact, prolonged the data collection period beyond what had initially been anticipated.

The inclusion criteria adopted in this research were: female accompanying spouses within the age range of 18–65, born

outside and not citizens of South Africa, who either initially accompanied or subsequently followed their spouses to the Republic of South Africa to achieve family reunification, who had legal residence status in South Africa, who migrated to South Africa while in possession of a tertiary qualification or work experience, who were currently or formerly employed in South Africa, and who were based in the Free State Province when the study was conducted.

At first, purposive sampling was employed to select participants adhering to the inclusion criteria, through our network of available participants. A complementary snowball sampling approach was then employed whereby participants were requested to refer us to others who met the inclusion criteria of the study. Although not by design, a noteworthy number of the research participants were Zimbabwean citizens (8). We believe this was influenced by the complementary snowball sampling approach, whereby two of the four initially identified participants were Zimbabweans who then mostly referred other Zimbabweans to us. This alludes to the significance of the Zimbabwe-South Africa migration corridor (Crush et al., 2017). The rest of the participants were citizens from various countries in sub-Saharan Africa namely Cameroon, Lesotho, Libya, Nigeria, and Swaziland (Eswatini). In efforts to contribute to the understudied migration research from a South-to-South perspective (Souza and Flippen, 2020), we intentionally excluded female migrants from wealthy countries who have been found to fare much better in terms of achieving LMI in South Africa, than migrants from sub-Saharan Africa (Department of Home Affairs, 2016; Ncube and Mkwananzi, 2020). In Zinatsa and Saurombe (2022a), we also found that European migrants were preferable than other African migrants in South Africa.

At the time of the interviews, the participants were aged between 35 and 52, and all were legally resident in South Africa. Table 1 below outlines other characteristics of the research sample, including the age of the participants upon entry into South Africa, the year they migrated, the highest qualification they possessed when they entered the host country, their highest qualification at the time of data collection, their occupation, and the number of years they each took to achieve labor market integration.

3.3. Data collection

The study employed a semi-structured interview guide to delve into various themes concerning labor market integration adapted from extant literature. At first, participants were asked open-ended questions to draw out their narratives relating to their move from their home country to South Africa within the family migration context, while highlighting their labor market trajectory. The questions were designed to explore matters pertaining to structural barriers, labor market

conditions and traditional gender roles. More specific questions were subsequently used to probe the participants into providing deeper insights on the subject matter. This phase was used to clarify issues arising from the initial narrative and/or to fill any gaps in the narrative we felt were key to answering the questions of the research study.

Thirteen individual interviews, each lasting ∼2 h, were carried out in the English language with female migrants who emigrated to South Africa from other sub-Saharan African countries. Data collection took place online *via* Zoom, between August 2020 and February 2021, in accordance with the COVID-19 social-distancing and other protocols that were in place at the time. Each interview was taped on an external device. Field notes were also made throughout each interview.

The nature of the study and the important ethical issues pertaining to consent and voluntary participation were individually explained to everyone that indicated their willingness to participate. Following verbal consent, each participant was provided with a consent letter to sign and return to us before the pre-determined interview date. Considering the substantial time required for the interviewing process, each one was conducted according to the participants' convenience and availability.

3.4. Data analysis

We transcribed the audio-taped interviews in a Microsoft Word document. During data collection and transcription, our engagement with the interview content led to the development of initial ideas regarding coding (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). Braun and Clarke's (2021b) six stages of thematic analysis were adopted for the study as follows: familiarization with the data through immersion, transcription of the data, producing initial codes, the reviewing of themes, the subsequent definition and reviewing of themes, and finally, the report compilation. The complete transcriptions were loaded to ATLAS.ti for analysis and the various cases were compared. Through an iterative process, codes were identified and developed both inductively and deductively from the interviews and the literature, to identify any gaps between the study and existing literature (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Hadi and Closs's (2015) strategies for ensuring the rigor and quality of the data were adopted in this study as follows:

Self-reflection: We clearly stated their role regarding the study to the participants and were cautious not to give way to any bias that may have resulted from subjective personal viewpoints.

Peer-debriefing: We engaged with two different researchers who were not directly linked to the study but had expertise in similar areas, for the sake of promoting reliability and validity, of course, within the parameters of ethical research conduct.

Extensive description: We offered comprehensive descriptions regarding the context of the research, traits,

TABLE 1 Characteristics of the research sample.

Pseudonym	Age at entry	Highest qualification on entry to South Africa	Highest Level of Education currently	Field/occupation	Year of entry into South Africa	Years taken to labor market integration
Andrea	24	BSc Library Science	Master's in Development Studies	Programme Manager	2007	5
Monica	40	BA (hons) Education Management	PhD in Education Management	Education	2009	2
Iris	29	BSc Animal Science	PhD in Animal Science	Lecturer	2009	3
Priscilla	39	Higher National Diploma in Accounting	PhD in Leadership	Pastor/Businesswoman	2006	9
Palesa	36	BSc Urban and Regional Planning	Master's in Urban Planning	Town Planner	2014	3
Tshepiso	22	BSc Chemistry	PhD in Environmental Management	Environmental Manager	2009	7
Grace	33	BSC Hons Economics	Masters Financial Management	Real Estate	2014	6
Theresa-May	26	National Diploma in Accounting	B Accounting	Quality Analyst	2010	8
Lucille	27	Higher National Diploma Accounting	B(Hons) Accounting	Lecturer	2012	4
Charlotte	22	National Diploma in Journalism	Diploma in Journalism	Admin	2008	7
Unarine	25	Bachelors in Human Resource Management	Bachelors in Human Resource Management	Real Estate	2010	4
Phumzile	21	National Certificate in Purchasing, Supplies and Stores Management	BA Biblical Studies	Pastor	2005	9
Nancy	33	BA Education	Masters in Translation	Teaching Assistant	2016	-

and characteristics of the sample, as well as the data collection and analysis methods employed in this study, thus enhancing the credibility and possible generalizability (though typically minimal) of the findings to various similar research contexts.

Lengthened engagement: We established rapport and earned the trust of the research participants through engaging with them over a considerable period, which allowed follow up insights to be garnered.

It is important to note that we are both migrants; one primarily being a skilled female accompanying spouse who had not achieved LMI at the time when the study was conducted, and the other, a skilled female migrant who independently achieved full LMI a few years before marriage. Consequently, it was important not to exert our personal experiences or biases in a way that would unduly shape the participants' responses during the interviews. On the other hand, we noticed that the research participants were more comfortable with relaying their experiences to us as blatantly as possible, due to the element of us being able to somewhat relate to their experiences and because they knew they could share their stories with impunity and a lack of judgement as we held no position of power over them. Nonetheless, we strove not to interpret the findings through

our own subjective lens, hence, we each analyzed the data separately then later merged our analyses in efforts to ensure that the views of the participants were represented in the most accurate and unbiased manner, a method which proved to be quite effective.

3.5. Research ethics and authorization

Informed consent, confidentiality and academic integrity were strictly adhered to in this study. Ethical clearance to conduct this research was granted by the General and Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC) of the University of the Free State. Ethical clearance code: UFS-HSD2020/0123/0506.

4. Findings

This research uncovered an intricate assortment of governing policies and factors functioning mainly at the macro levels through policies and practices. These policies and factors were critical in unequivocally and inadvertently influencing

the conduct of accompanying spouses with respect to the labor market in South Africa. Overall, these governing policies and factors seemed to mostly have an adverse effect on the labor market paths of accompanying spouses in South Africa.

Macro-level policies and factors were mostly associated with State and State policies, namely, migration legislation, spouse dependence, the reinforcement of traditional gender roles and restrictive employment legislation which forced the participants' deskilling of qualifications, which were all problematic for LMI.

4.1. Theme 1: Migration legislation

Accompanying spouses were eager to secure employment after arriving in South Africa. However, despite their legal residence status in the country, accompanying spouses on spousal visas are not permitted to work in South Africa. This was regarded as one of the greatest impediments to LMI, particularly in the early stages of the labor migration trajectory of many accompanying spouses, as suggested by the following participant:

> "… then they realize you have the accompanying spouse visa, then they'll [the employer] just reject the application. So yeah, definitely, it limited the number of opportunities during that time." (Andrea, Master's in Development Studies, program manager, took 5 years to achieve LMI)

Over and above the creation of barriers to employment, the spousal visa was also regarded as restrictive, in that it set up obstacles around accessing institutional cultural capital (education). This was important for most accompanying spouses, whose skills, upon emigration, could not be categorized as critical or in short supply in the labor market. Studying further was regarded as one of the means of upskilling or upgrading oneself, widening one's employment opportunities and keeping oneself occupied. To enroll in institutions of higher education required one to convert to a study permit. However, qualifications from the country of origin were not always rated equivalent to the South African qualifications (see section on deskilling). Critically, the spousal visa was not only a barrier to education but also to starting a business. Thus, the accompanying visa was regarded as highly restrictive for any form of LMI.

4.2. Theme 2: Dependence

Self-determination and independence were viewed as critical to the accompanying spouse's well-being. However, the view of many accompanying spouses was that the spousal visa set up an undesirable pattern of dependence on the lead spouse. On an accompanying visa, getting a driver's license and opening a bank account were subject to the husband's permission or authority. Achieving these things was seen as mostly reliant on the husband willingness and benevolence, as suggested by the participant view that follow:

> "… Even if you try and open an account, you have to be with him literally. I have my spouse permit which is written in big letters if I can say that accompanied by [name supplied] with passport number." (Unarine, Bachelor's in HRM, real estate agent, took 4 years to achieve LMI)

> "The thing is with an accompanying spouse permit, if you want to do anything that's legal for yourself, you can't do it without his [spouse] consent. For instance, if I want to go and get a driver's license, he has to sign and say that he has authorized. If I want to open a bank account, he has to sign… There's a lot of restrictions that you have. You are not independent basically. Everything, you must go through the husband." (Theresa-May, B Accounting, quality analyst, took 8 years to achieve LMI)

The acquisition of permanent residence permits appeared to ease the barriers to LMI but did not guarantee full LMI due to, among other reasons, what was perceived to be the non-desirability of hiring non-South Africans. Most accompanying spouses relied on the acquisition of the permanent residence permits first by the lead spouses. Time to acquisition of spousal-based permanent residence was strongly dependent on the lead spouse's success in acquiring permanent residence and visa processing efficiency. In many instances, the conditionality of the permanent residence applications was also regarded as quite an impediment for self-determination, as implied by the subsequent viewpoints:

> "…and probably around 2018, I think my husband applied, 'cause then he was due for getting a PR. So, we thought, let him apply for his PR first, so that once the PR comes out, we [spouse and children] are all good to go.… We thought now we can apply for the PRs, then my husband's ID was also out." (Priscilla, PhD in Leadership, pastor/businesswoman, took 9 years to achieve LMI)

> "There was a condition that I must remain married to him for the next 2 years after acquiring my PR. If I was to divorce it means it was going to fall away. So, you find out that, that's where a restriction comes in. Let us assume, I was in an abusive marriage, it meant for a woman you had to stay, to wait for that PR or otherwise it was going to affect me to go back and restart again." (Monica, PhD in Education Management, educationist, took 5 years to achieve LMI)

The pattern of dependence reduced accompanying spouse to an appendage to the lead spouse. In addition to family ties, this pattern of dependence became a greater impediment in regard to accompanying spouses' abilities to pursue any particular

course independent from their spouses, as indicated by the following interviewee:

> "Being an accompanying spouse. I wish I had just come on my own, looked for my things on my own maybe before I came. I should have established myself." (Monica, PhD in Education Management, educationist, took 5 years to achieve LMI)

4.3. Theme 3: Reinforcement of traditional gender roles

Regarding the huge responsibilities of caring for the extended family, traditional gender roles in which the female was expected to stay at home and do the job of nurturing and household chores was unpreferable and undesirable to accompanying spouses and unfavorable for their families. This was mainly because the core motivation for migration was economical.

Migration legislation was however seen to reinforce traditional gender roles in which the lead spouse (male) was regarded as the sole breadwinner. Most accompanying spouses perceived themselves as being forced into the role of housewife due to the severe restrictions imposed by the migration legislation, a role which some were not familiar with, as evidenced by these perspectives:

> "You're just accompanying, you're just there to wash the plates basically and do nothing for yourself." (Theresa-May, B Accounting, quality analyst, took 8 years to achieve LMI)
>
> "You can't do anything…You literally are just a housewife to be honest." (Unarine, Bachelor's in HRM, real estate agent, took 4 years to achieve LMI)

Despite being highly skilled, through the accordance of the highly restrictive accompanying spouse visa, many accompanying spouses felt relegated to undertaking reproductive, unpaid care work in the home despite their qualifications and work experience. Due to limited finances arising from a single salary and added responsibilities of caring for the extended family, accompanying spouses were not always able to hire a maid to then take on household and childcare duties. Not hiring a maid was regarded as a means of saving as much money as possible due to the fact that a household would rely on one salary. The burden of the caregiving then automatically fell to the accompanying spouses, as implied by the following statement:

> "I mean especially like argh, you are at home already, why would we need help? And sometimes when you really look at it when you get someone who will help you one or two days and they go because I was at home and I

was stay home mom. Anyway, we need that extra money." (Charlotte, Diploma in Journalism, administrator, took 7 years to achieve LMI)

4.4. Theme 4: Deskilling of qualifications

At an elementary level, deskilling took place due to the accompanying spouse's mode of migration, but also because of emphasis on skilled migration in South Africa. Despite being educated at a tertiary level, most accompanying spouses found themselves in a situation where their qualifications did not fall within the critical skills shortage lists defined by the Department of Labor. As a result, they could not independently apply for work visas which would significantly have expanded their potential to gain meaningful employment. Not being deemed to dispose of critical skills had more than one consequence: it put them in the unfavorable position of being in direct competition with South African nationals who were being prioritized in the South African labor market; and it made the accompanying spouses reliant on the professionalism and objectivity of the employer around selecting the best qualified person for the job, which according to the participants, was not always honored by employers. Accompanying spouses with critical skills were able to bypass the general work permit route and appeared to have greater ease round entering the labor market.

Deskilling of qualifications was also evident at an institutional level through the South Africa Qualifications Authority (2017) which is the main institution responsible for the verification of foreign qualifications. Deskilling due to this situation particularly impacted on the intention to study further (as a tool for increasing employability) where some accompanying spouses had to "redo" certain qualifications. This had the effect of not only putting them back in terms of time but also increased the curriculum vitae (CV) gaps that eventually did put some of them at a significant advantage when ready to seek employment opportunities, as shown in the following response:

> "Funny enough 'cause I thought I was going to go to masters straight away but they told me no, you know these SAQA qualifications, I don't know how the rating goes by, sometimes the rating is also not so relevant to what we have done… So, in my case I thought I was ready to start with masters. I wrote a proposal, but they said I must start with an honors." (Monica, PhD in Education Management, educationist, took 5 years to achieve LMI)

Preference for South African citizens (including naturalized citizens) among some employers was attributed to the Broad-based Black Economic Policy, as highlighted in the following statement:

"… you just have to abide to their rules because you know for sure if they employ someone that is a BBBEE candidate, they get something from the government which means if they employ you as a foreigner, they are going to forfeit those benefits…" (Lucille, B(Honors) Accounting, lecturer, took 4 years to achieve LMI)

Altogether, the complex assemblage of macro governing policies and factors appeared to have a largely negative impact on the overall LMI of female accompanying spouses. A strong overarching sense of othering appeared to be the dominant rationality behind most of the strategies employed to keep accompanying spouses out of the labor market.

5. Discussion

This research sought to explore the macro governing policies and factors that influence the integration of accompanying spouses into the South African labor market. The research employed a qualitative approach to obtain the viewpoints of accompanying spouses in the Free State, who migrated to South Africa to achieve family unification or re-unification.

Global literature shows that accompanying spouses are a notable influence in attracting skilled migrants within the family migration setting (Bastia and Piper, 2019; Föbker, 2019). Immigration policies that focus on economic growth are criticized for failing to acknowledge the complexities of family migration, particularly, the economic development paradigm fails to attend to the rights, protections, and unique subjectivities of female migrants (Bastia and Piper, 2019). Unsurprisingly, as confirmed by other researchers, including Ncube et al. (2019), economic advantage was a strong push factor for migration from countries of origin for migrant families represented in this study. It is notable that almost half of the migrant families in the study emigrated to South Africa in the period 2007–2009, which suggests the significant impacts of the global economic recession on countries of origin.

Rising unemployment in South Africa, accompanied by the belief that migrants "steal jobs" and the alleged readiness of unskilled migrants to work for lower wages have all contributed to the rise of xenophobic attacks against immigrants (Landau, 2011; Parshotam and Ncube, 2017; Chinyakata et al., 2019; Vermaak and Muller, 2019). These attacks are particularly severe against migrants of African and Asian origin (OECD/ILO, 2018a). Anti-immigrant sentiments continue to be pervasive despite evidence that immigrants do not displace native-born workers and, in fact, make a noteworthy contribution to the economy of South Africa [International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2022]. For instance, migrants contributed nine percent to gross domestic product (GDP) in the year 2011 (OECD/ILO, 2018b). However, South Africa faces a chronic unemployment challenge due to an increasing population but limited industrial expansion. The unemployment rate stood at around 27.7% in 2017 (Statistics South Africa, 2019), which has added to the frustration of locals toward migrants, and while unskilled migrants bear the greater brunt of this frustration, it often also affects skilled migrants who are disdained for their various differences to their local counterparts (such as cultural differences, foreign accents, and a lack of knowledge of the local languages), as demonstrated in another study we conducted (Zinatsa and Saurombe, 2022a). At the same time, the country faces a critical skills shortage which the government acknowledges can be substantially alleviated through the attraction of highly skilled international labor (OECD/ILO, 2018b). Migration scholars in the South African context express their concerns regarding the general hostility toward foreigners which may render migration to the country by skilled international labor unappealing, including where family migration is concerned (Chinyakata et al., 2019; Vermaak and Muller, 2019; Ncube and Mkwananzi, 2020).

Governmentality can shape the subjectivities of the ones governed. For example, Holliday et al. (2019) posit that the categorization of migrant women as dependents, be it by design or by default, shapes their rights in the host country and their ability to exercise those rights. This study found that the males were most likely to be the lead spouses and females were most likely to be dependent on them due to their respective qualifications and experience. In addition, by virtue of having the more desirable skills, lead spouses were able to exert more influence over decision making in the family, as reflected in the statement "it is my husband who steers the ship." While leading was therefore not necessarily an outcome of traditional gender roles *per se*, the evidence does suggest the subtle and persistent influence of gender roles entrenched in patriarchal rationalities, which does not favor the attainment of the global sustainable development goal of gender equality (United Nations, 2017). Accompanying spouses were mostly placed in a role in which they were following, again, revealing the great dependency of female spouses on male spouses (Ncube et al., 2019).

As indicated in the literature, deskilling is common among migrant women globally, and primarily entails the non-recognition of qualifications attained in one's country of origin (O'Neil et al., 2016; Agatiello and Humer, 2018; Røysum, 2020; Purkayastha and Bircan, 2021; Zinatsa and Saurombe, 2022a). The process of distinguishing skilled migrants from unskilled or semi-skilled ones, and the ascription of value regarding the labor structure, are critical elements of governmentality (Allan and McElhinny, 2017; Del Percio, 2018). At the time of their migration, many of the participants were in their 20 and 30s, which was well within the productive working age in which they could potentially have made a significant contribution to economic development in South Africa. Most of the qualifications that the accompanying spouses held, however, were not aligned to the skills regarded as critical or

in short supply to the South African labor market, thus limiting LMI prospects.

Governmentality allows us to understand the macrophysics of power and allows us to see the connections between "power and freedom, resistance and government" (Death, 2016, p. 209). Immigration practices, programs and policies form diverse immigrant groups and essentially influence migrants' rights and identities (power and freedom). Gender inequality in the general global labor market is evidenced by better employment prospects for men, and a significant gender pay gap with lower pay for women in the same jobs as men (Espi et al., 2019; Gereke et al., 2020). Mbiyozo (2018) suggests that one of the challenges in this regard is that most of the skills regarded as critical are male-oriented, thus putting female accompanying spouses at a significant disadvantage by restricting their prospects of LMI. The findings of this study confirm this view. As such, gender inequality and inequity are perpetuated in the labor space. Under South Africa's skilled migration policy regime, those with skills falling outside the category of critical/ special skills are automatically demoted to the level of the deskilled. This makes it difficult for accompanying spouses without these skills to independently acquire permits to work in South Africa.

In non-Western countries, it is common for women to have the duty and responsibility to take care of the home and their children, while men take on the role of breadwinners (O'Neil et al., 2016; Ala-mantila and Fleischmann, 2018). As a result of patriarchal ideologies, women are typically taught to put their household needs above their own aspirations (Phan et al., 2015; Föbker, 2019). Like what was found in Ncube et al.'s (2019) study, the macro governing policies emerging from South Africa's migration legislation can be regarded as particularly detrimental for accompanying spouses' LMI. The adjusted section 11(1)(b)(iv) of the Immigration Act of 2002 provides that the spouse of a South African temporary residence visa holder cannot work, study, or conduct business (Department of Home Affairs, 2017), thus inadvertently promoting traditional gender roles. This study found that, due to the extremely restrictive nature of the migration legislation, particularly regarding the spousal visa, accompanying spouses were relegated to unproductive and unpaid care work in the home. As a result, the migration legislation enforces a situation in which accompanying spouses became appendages to their husbands, whereby they were forced to rely on the latter's benevolence (O'Neil et al., 2016).

Research by Maza (2020) suggests that the period soon after migration is fundamental to future assimilation, both economically and socially. This research suggests that the severe restrictions imposed by the migration legislation, especially pertaining to the spousal visa, do not bode well for future LMI of accompanying spouses. The inability of accompanying spouses to further their studies to expand their capabilities for LMI, while on an accompanying spouse's permit, was

established to be problematic, further increasing an initial period of career stagnation. Critically, as other research suggests (Banerjee and Phan, 2015), accompanying spouses were not able to reconcile the gaps, irrespective of their later progress.

Overall, the macro governing policies and factors had the effect of restricting and limiting accompanying spouse's options, and this was detrimental to LMI, particularly, full LMI. Resonant with other global studies (Wojczewski et al., 2015; Britell, 2016; O'Neil et al., 2016), the female migrants in this study experienced lengthy breaks to eventual employment. Various barriers to LMI are indicated in extant literature, for instance, in Zinatsa and Saurombe (2022b), we found that the governing technologies that appeared to be the most difficult to subvert were those relating to immobility on account of family ties and those relating to exclusion, particularly ethnic-based exclusion. The findings of Mbiyozo (2018) regarding this were alike.

For the foreseeable future, South Africa is likely to remain a key hub for immigration in the sub-Saharan region, thus harnessing migration to achieve economic growth will remain a top priority (Department of Home Affairs, 2017). Facilitating the full LMI of accompanying spouses is a key consideration in this regard. The crafting and implementing of gender sensitive policies which consider the intricacies of family migration is necessary, especially those pertaining to the assimilation needs of female migrants. Family friendly policies should look into fostering migration experiences which are pleasant for both the lead and the accompanying spouse. It would also be beneficial for the policy framework to consider the unintended effect of ascribing traditional gender responsibilities through the assigning of "dependent" status to female accompanying spouses, which promotes their redomestication.

Freitas et al. (2015) conducted a study on spouses of Belgian sponsors who were in possession of superior educational qualifications and found that their classification as family migrants and state influence plays a noteworthy role in their successful LMI. This was supported by our findings in Zinatsa and Saurombe (2022b) which revealed that the state—sometimes inadvertently—influences and exacerbates labor market restrictions. A lesson can be learnt from Belgium regarding the more efficient encouragement of family reunification of dependent migrants to the lead migrant, whereby family migrants are expected to provide evidence of integration to have their permit renewed (Purkayastha and Bircan, 2021). This implies the nation's somewhat concern for and continuous evaluation of the support systems and policies that are in place to ensure the successful integration of these migrants and is particularly beneficial for skilled spouses. Ryan and Mulholland (2014) found that networking was often crucial for migrant women to access the labor market and build careers, and this view was corroborated by Zinatsa and Saurombe (2022a) who found that social networks were one of the aids to the successful LMI of migrants. Home countries

should try to advise tied migrants concerning the context of South Africa's labor market, employment possibilities, and the tertiary qualifications required to address critical skills shortages in the market, before relocating. This would greatly enhance the possibility of making a stark contribution in the host country and personal envisaged economic outcomes.

The qualitative research methodology does not rely on large samples but rather the depth of insights (Braun and Clarke, 2021b). The sample size in this study was relatively small but sufficient for qualitative research of this nature. Since the study was conducted to satisfy the requirements of a postgraduate qualification, this imposed time and budgetary constraints, hence the data collection period could not be stretched to include more participants. As is the case with most qualitative studies, this study's findings were specific to the research setting and thus would not easily be generalizable to alternate contexts. Since snowball sampling had a noteworthy place in the data collection of this research, participant diversity was diminished regarding age, race, nationality and other biographical aspects, as participants mostly referred others of a similar demographic profile to themselves, to participate in the study. This reduced demographically diverse representation among participants, although we strove to ensure overall scientific rigor. While the study participants were elected based on their legal status as accompanying spouses, it became apparent that, within this category, a significant number of sub-categories resided, thus limiting the findings of the study due to reduced consideration of social stratification.

Recommendations for future research include, a vast quantitative survey or mixed methods inquiry including participants both the male and female genders—investigating the differences between male and female tied migrant experiences could contribute to assessing the specific gender inequalities concerning access to the labor market, and the results could possibly inform policy relating to tied migrants; emphasizing on specific industries, like a typically male-dominated industry, and obtaining the viewpoints of how women experience the labor-market in these industries—investigating the gender inequalities that still exist in male dominated professions and industries, specifically in relation to tied migrants and making policy recommendations that could bridge these inequalities in line with the global sustainable development goals; placing more emphasis on tied migrants who could not ultimately assimilate into the labor market—investigating the encumbrances to LMI among tied migrants who have failed to achieve LMI over prolonged periods of time and making pertinent recommendations to alleviate or resolve their impact; and a comparative research approach focused on reciprocal LMI prospects—investigating the specific economic, social, and other benefits to the host country, of aiding the strategic LMI of tied migrants, based on the country's critical workforce needs and using the results to inform future labor migration policy and legislation.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study support the viewpoint that general reception is fundamental in predicating the results of labor migration. South Africa sets up a unique broadly exclusionary macro context given its continuously heightened limiting migration and employment laws and prevalent immigrant unfriendly disposition. Critically, accompanying spouses are reduced to being housewives and add-ons to their spouses. In this manner, their likelihood of assimilating into the labor market is notably compromised. Accompanying spouses continue to be driven by their individual ambitions informed by how they denote success in the labor market context. Hence, it is important to ascertain ways in which tied migrants could also substantially contribute to the economy of South Africa, rather than merely taking up space.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the University of the Free State, General Human Research Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

This paper was extracted from the doctoral thesis of FZ, who primarily conducted the research, while MDS offered overall guidance regarding all aspects of the study as well as the research conceptualization, general editorial inputs, and the ultimate write-up of the research article. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Racialization, colonialism, and imperialism: a critical autoethnography on the intersection of forced displacement and race in a settler colonial context

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Migration has been identified as a priority area for policy responses by both the federal and provincial/territorial governments yet, much of our knowledge about migration is not premised on addressing current xenophobic and racist narratives about migrants. The purpose of this research is an interrogation of Canada's colonialism, imperialism, and racialization, which produce specific oppressive policies and practices that have impacted my family. This research is premised on the understanding that in the space between what is known about migration in Canada and what is not, a great deal of narrative and interpretive work is done that makes assumptions about migrants, specifically forcibly displaced people from the Global South. Through a critical autoethnography focused on my lived experiences as a descendant of forcibly displaced Chinese-Vietnamese people living in a settler colonial nation state, this study critiques to what extent these assumptions are founded, and to what extent they represent a socio-political climate in which migration is set out as particular problems requiring a legal and policing solution. In particular, my analysis centers anti-colonialism and anti-racism, shifting to resistance to systemic violence and liberation, while considering the discursive and on-the-ground effects of racist, colonial, and imperial policies and practice. Set against the backdrop of the rise of white nationalism, xenophobia, and racism across all levels of government and academia, and the general public, the results of this study produce a counter-narrative focused on the intersection of forced displacement and race in a settler colonial context, which is both timely and urgent.

1. Introduction

When I was growing up, I was disconnected from my family's history and their journey to the nation now known as Canada. I did not understand the circumstances that led to our displacement and how they continued to affect me. It was not really until my undergraduate studies that I learned that my family were refugees who fled following the war in Vietnam in the late 1970s. The silence that surrounded our lived experiences created a situation where I felt untethered from my ancestors and unsure of where I belonged. I now understand that

this is because my family has struggled and continues to struggle with the effects of the war, trauma, and displacement. I still do not have a full picture of what happened. I get snippets here and there, and to this day I am still learning about these fractured memories and stories from my elders while filling in the gaps with research, literature, and conversations with other Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese refugees.

The purpose of this paper is to counter assumptions made about the Vietnamese diaspora in Canada, specifically people who were refugees. These assumptions include: the construction of the grateful refugee, the model minority myth, and the perpetual foreigner stereotype, Through a critical autoethnography focused on my experiences as a descendant of forcibly displaced Chinese-Vietnamese people living in a settler colonial nation state, this study critiques to which degree these assumptions are founded, and to which degree they represent a socio-political climate in which migration is set out as a particular set of issues requiring a legal and policing solution. My analysis centers anti-colonialism and anti-racism, shifting to resistance to systemic violence and the support of collective liberation, while considering the discursive and on-the-ground effects of racist, colonial, and imperial policies and practice. I wrote this not with the intention of representing everyone who is a part of the Vietnamese diaspora as this is not possible due to the varying experiences amongst the community. Rather, I wrote this to share my story in hopes of keeping the conversation going. This paper is part of a Special Issue entitled, Bodies at the Borders: Analyzing the Objectification and Containment of Migrants at Border Crossing and edited by Ryan et al.

2. A bit of herstory

My ancestors are Teo Chew nang, from the coastal region of the Guangdong province in China. They migrated to Vietnam from China in the early 1900s, displaced by war and drought. Several generations of my family were born and raised in the southern part of Vietnam while the nation was colonized by France and then briefly by Japan. They experienced a slow process of decolonization led by Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Communist nationalist movement the Viet Minh. In 1946, an anti-colonial war began with Communist nationalists. The United States (US) got involved and spent $2.5 billion supporting France (Menand, 2018). In 1954, France lost and negotiated a settlement, the Geneva Accords, that partitioned the country at the seventh parallel until 1956 when a democratic election would be held. All parties agreed except for the US who did not want to see communism spreading throughout Asia. An election was never held. As a result, my family survived a decades long civil war produced by Western nations, outsiders who decided to split Vietnam in half, creating a division that has lingering effects on the community to this day. North Vietnam was governed by Vietnamese communists and South Vietnam was backed by American aid and eventually American troops. Violations happened at either end with violence deliberately inflicted on civilians as assassinations and massacres were carried out while weapons of mass destruction were dropped across the nation.

The US planted Vietnamese people to control South Vietnam—"freely" elected corrupt officials to be switched out when the previous one failed. This method was facilitated by $1.5 billion in aid between 1955 and 1961 (Menand, 2018). Even by 1963, when peaceful coexistence was the policy of American and Soviet governments, the US began their strategy of military escalation. They were repeatedly warned about the recklessness of their involvement, yet they continued to choose war. In 1963, there were 16,000 American advisors in South Vietnam (Amadeo, 2022). Over the next decade, about 3,000,000 soldiers would land there (Flitton, 1999). By the time they left, the US had dropped 6.1 million tons of bombs, more than three times as many as the Allies dropped during the entirety of the Second World War (Miguel and Roland, 2005).

April 30 in 1975 is known as the fall of Saigon, Black April, or *tháng tu den*. It is a date that the global diaspora grieves yet it is celebrated in Vietnam to this day. Over the next 20 years, between 1 and 1.2 million people left Vietnam by boat. The number of people leaving peaked in 1978 and 1979—the years both my paternal and maternal families left. One of the roots of this mass exodus was the government in Hanoi targeting ethnically Chinese people and abolishing "bourgeois trade" in the south (Chan, 2006) resulting in dispossession, persecution, imprisonment, and massacres. My family has spoken about how the government conducted raids before they could do anything about it. Their small businesses were eventually shut down as a result. The government then changed the currency, devaluing it, and as a result, my family lost their financial resources overnight. During this time, my aunt recalled hearing a message on the radio that explicitly told people of Chinese ethnicity to leave the country.

Caught in the middle of tensions between Vietnam, Cambodia, and China due to Vietnam's dispute with the latter nations in 1978 and 1979, Vietnamese people of Chinese descent had two options: to leave Vietnam or submit themselves to re-education camps where they would be tortured, starved, enslaved, and murdered. They were targeted as French colonial support of Chinese people's participation in commerce over the Vietnamese population resulted in their control of commerce in South Vietnam. As such, restrictions on economic activity following reunification resulted in my family seeing no future for themselves in Vietnam. They were forced to sell their homes and belongings to survive, leaving their lives behind to get on a derelict boat in the middle of the night with their loved ones. The government profited from the exploitation through the cost of exit fees and documentation, which my family told me was up to the equivalent of $3,000 for adults and $1,500 for children. Of those who left during this period, 800,000 people arrived at the shores of Malaysia safely despite pirates, violence, and storms (Vu, 2007). This included my family members and our community. The rest, approximately 200,000 to 400,000 people died at sea during the weeks-long journey (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2000).

To prevent people from settling in Malaysia the government housed half of the people who arrived under severely crowded and inhumane conditions on small islands off the coast.

When my paternal family arrived at the shores of Malaysia in 1979, they were sent to a refugee camp on Pulau Bidong, an isolated island off the east coast of Malaysia. The island was meant to house 4,500 refugees, but by a year after the temporary camp

was set up the number of refugees had risen to 40,000 people (Thompson, 2010). When my father has spoken about fleeing Vietnam, he is clear that the refugee camp was worse than the boat journey itself. He recalls the dehumanization people experienced, witnessing violence, having to search for debris from boats to build shelter, the unsanitary conditions of the camp, and the lack of clean water. However, while there was devastation and violence at the refugee camp, there was also reciprocal support and collective care among the community. My family have told me stories about banding together to search for food and firewood, setting up a resource distribution system, and sharing knowledge about the resettlement process.

Eventually, Malaysia began to deny entry to boat people and would even push boats that arrived back out to sea (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2000). The Association of Southeast Asian nations warned that they would not be accepting any more refugees arriving by boat (Kumin, 2008). In response, The United Nations invited 65 governments to a conference in Geneva (Kumin, 2008). As a result of the 1979 Geneva Conference, Vietnam agreed to stop illegal departures and provide a system for people leaving the nation. Asian countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand agreed to stop turning away boats. Lastly, in exchange for providing temporary asylum, Western nations agreed that refugees would be resettled in the Global North, including the settler colonial nations, such US, Canada, and Australia, and European nations including France. In the end, between 1955 and 2002 the war and political violence led to a democide which resulted in the loss of a total of 3,800,000 lives or approximately 1 of 10 people of the overall population of Vietnam (Rummel, 1997; Obermeyer et al., 2008). Among these people, about 1,250,000 or one-third were murdered by foreign soldiers, including those from France and the US, and by the governments of North and South Vietnam in the struggle for control of the nation state (Rummel, 1997).

Once they were privately sponsored to Canada, my family and community were expected to assimilate and assume the role of grateful refugees, rejecting communism while supporting Western democracies (Ngo, 2016a). Since then, our lives have been shaped by the Canadian state project to "settle, adapt, and integrate" and contribute to the capitalist system, while being grateful for being rescued by the state—even though Canada participated in and was complicit in the war in Vietnam (Price, 2011; Nguyen, 2013; Ngo, 2016a). To this end the literature problematically constructs Vietnamese Canadians as productive refugees, describing us as a model minority in education, adaptation, and participation in capitalism (Ngo, 2016b; Hou, 2021; Nguyen, 2021). In doing so we are essentialized and perceived as acclimatized, assimilable, and economically successful (Espiritu, 2006, 2014; Nguyen, 2012, 2013, 2018; Ngo, 2016b). We are expected to overcome our trauma and struggles to gain financial independence, so we are no longer a burden to the system. We are expected to be hardworking, resourceful, and successful with minimal assistance from the state, while being committed to the state (Nguyen, 2013). Using us as a success story of refugee rescue and resettlement in the Canadian context, we are constructed as "exceptional," erasing the significant struggles many of us continue to face because of structural and systemic barriers in Canada. As a result, our diverse

struggles and needs are not seen by researchers, policy makers, and practitioners.

It is important to note that in the Canadian context, Vietnamese people have been subsumed in the Asian racial identity category and as such are subject to anti-Asian racism. Generally, Asians are stereotyped as being the model minority and at the same time perpetual foreigners. This dehumanizes us and sets us up as objects to be exploited for our labor, as exotified objects for consumption, or as a wedge to oppress other racialized people, including Black and Indigenous peoples. A critique of the term Asian is necessary here as it is a socially constructed group that reproduces essentialism. According to Lowe (1991), it is a monolith label and the monoracialism of Asians upholds racist systems that categorize Asians as a homogenous group. In this way our unique experiences are erased. However, it is important to reflect on being a part of a racial group that is targeted because they are perceived as belonging to the group. This offers an opportunity for working collectively to resist systemic violence toward people who identify and/or are seen as Asian.

The stereotype of Asian people as perpetual foreigners is based on orientalism (Said, 1978), the imagination of the Middle East and Asia as the land of the "other," different, and exotic. This connects to imperialism and colonialism, whereby the American militarization of Asian land is glorified, and Asia is imagined as being saved by Western imperial militarism. Despite the reality that some migrants, particularly those from the Global South, have their own histories of colonialism and genocide, they often arrive in Canada with the illusion that fairness and equity are rooted in the values of the nation, when in fact, a history and legacy of colonialism and racism shows the opposite. Moreover, model minority theorists show how the construction of Asians as the desirable immigrant subject dismisses and delegitimizes the political claims of Indigenous peoples and non-conforming racialized others in the Global North (Park, 2011; Ku, 2012; Ngo, 2016a,b). Within the model minority discourse, Asian peoples' successes are attributed to their "culture" which comprises hard work, self-reliance, and a focus on educational attainment. Thus, Asian peoples' successes are linked to "cultural" factors, implying that other groups' issues are also linked to cultural factors rather than structural racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism (Ngo, 2016b). Pon (2000) discusses how the model minority discourses reinforces the liberal belief that Canada and its institutions are fair, accessible, and accommodating to people who work hard enough.

3. Contextualizing my critical autoethnography in response to colonialism, imperialism, and racialization

3.1. Colonialism

In the 1500s, European colonizers referred to Indigenous lands as feminized, racialized, inferior, and open for domination. From this orientalism (Said, 1978) grew, which led to imperialism and colonialism. A couple of historical examples are the atrocities

committed against Vietnamese women during French colonization and then during the American war in Vietnam. It is important to note Vietnamese resistance to French colonization. For the US got involved once Vietnamese nationalists successfully overthrew French colonial rule. This is indicative of white supremacist colonial capitalism which is grounded in the multiple logics of slavery, genocide, and orientalism wars (Smith, 2006).

Historical and ongoing colonialism and racism must be acknowledged, as there is a prevalent ontology of forgetting this history in Canada (Razack et al., 2010). This ontology of forgetting is taken up by Vietnamese diaspora as there are a lack of opportunities for learning about the experiences of and building relationships with Indigenous peoples. As a result, the genocide of First Nations people is forgotten, as is the history of white supremacy, racism, and Western imperialism, which were fundamental to the construction and development of North America (Lowe, 1996). This ontology of forgetting is pervasive in the Canadian imagination about the Vietnamese community whereby anti-Asian racism and white supremacy are rarely mentioned. Indigenous peoples and Vietnamese refugees, among other racialized refugees, share distinct histories of colonialism, dispossession, racism, and exclusion. Both communities have been affected by the codification of racism through education and Canadian legislation and policies, such as citizenship and immigration laws, which supported the development of a privileged White national population with rights and access to resources that non-White people were historically excluded from.

A debate exists over the notion of migrant settler colonialism in the Canadian context. Lawrence and Dua (2005) suggest that racialized immigrants are settlers as they are complicit in and benefit from the settler colonial project. On the other hand, Sharma and Wright (2008) responded by critiquing the conflation of migration and colonialism. This debate has led to scholarship navigating global imperialism and white supremacy, which connect immigrant and Indigenous peoples in geopolitical spaces while considering the possibilities for solidarity. What has come out of the literature is the anti-racist concept of immigrant settlerhood (Chatterjee, 2019), which considers Indigenous self-determination and accountability for immigrant settlement on Indigenous land. Tuck and Yang (2012) followed up by discussing the irreconcilability of immigrant and Indigenous justice movements. Chatterjee (2019) argues that the separation of immigrant labor exploitation and Indigenous land dispossession conceals the settler political economy. She suggests that doing so ignores the realities of historic and ongoing capitalist, colonial exploitation of land and labor, racialized precarity, and the legitimization of White settler colonialism. Chatterjee (2019) states that settler colonialism, Indigenous dispossession, and immigrant settlement are intertwined social, historical, economic, and political practices.

Indigenous peoples and racialized migrants, including Vietnamese refugees, are connected via the capitalist colonial project of dispossession and precarious resettlement, which occur simultaneously (Chatterjee, 2019). While they experience different yet co-exiting colonial projects in distinct contexts, they share experiences of dehumanization, marginalization, deliberate impoverishment, and experiences of racism. Colonial assumptions about Indigenous peoples and racialized migrants have shaped how they have been treated through State policies and practices. These discourses include both groups being savages, deficient, and inferior compared to their White, settler counterparts. This has led to assimilative policies and practices to bring Indigenous peoples and racialized migrants closer to the dominant and normative culture. As such, knowledge, teachings, and skills brought to settler colonial nations are not recognized, valued, nor validated. A result of this is that racialized migrant communities are relegated to the lowest rungs of the labor market (Das Gupta et al., 2014). In addition to exploiting the labor of racialized migrants this also supports the dispossession of Indigenous claims to land through the management of immigrant populations by choosing who is a part of the nation state and labor market. According to Tuck and Yang (2012) this creates pathways to neo-colonialism for the possession of resources without unsettling the white settler domination of the nation state.

Following the Second World War and the 1947 *Canadian Citizenship Act*, the federal government managed immigration and citizenship under the Department of Indian Affairs, resulting in the establishment of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (DCI). Up until 1966, when Indian Affairs was moved to a new ministry, its activities mirrored the citizenship policies created for migrants, relegating First Nations peoples as migrants on their own land (Bohaker and Iacovetta, 2009). Bohaker and Iacovetta (2009) posit that the DCI was part of a deliberate policy to control two groups perceived as threatening to the federal government, foreigners to be absorbed into White Canadian society. The initiatives aimed at First Nations peoples were less respectful of cultural traditions and political autonomy in comparison to those targeted toward European migrants. They were similar to the policy of assimilation that predated Confederation. In their comparison of the initiatives, "… the racial, gender, and class dimensions of a misplaced experiment to create a 'one-size-fits-all' Canadian citizenship that, for all its talk of respect, tolerance, and common Canadian values, belonged to an ongoing project of white-settler nation building" (Bohaker and Iacovetta, 2009, p. 430).

In relation to Vietnamese refugees, while they seek citizenship and the promise of safety and security, Indigenous peoples have had settler citizenship imposed on them despite Indigenous sovereignty and their connection to the land, which is both natural and spiritual. In this way, the nation state socially organizes the everyday lives of the Vietnamese diaspora. Specifically, through the management of immigration and colonization the nation state controls and organizes people and activities at political, administrative, and institutional levels (Ng, 2006). As such, the bodies of racialized migrants are regulated and controlled by politicians, legislation, the Canadian Border Services Agency, and institutions such as the police, the criminal justice system, immigration, and the health care system (Ng, 2006). Generally, Indigenous peoples are not included or consulted in these processes. Specific to Vietnamese refugees, NGO resettlement workers played a role in both the micro and macro levels of the migration process by observing, helping, or hindering the ways in which refugees negotiated the selection process at the refugee camps (Vu and Satzewich, 2016). They held the power to decide who would be sponsored by which country.

A question I continue to grapple with is how is the land engaged with when people arrive in Canada—moving from one colonial nation state to another? How do we take into consideration the reality that some people who are seen as refugees are also experiencing their own process of de-indigenization? According to Adese and Phung (2021), "de-indigenization … refers to processes and programs geared toward irrevocably separating Indigenous peoples from their languages, cultures, familial relationships, ways of knowing, and lands" (p. 119). While there is the aspect of location and physical characteristics of the environment, there are also social or cultural meanings of place. How have Vietnamese people understood settler colonialism and how does it affect the ways they participate in society? Despite living in Canada and accepting it as their home while building a future for their children and grandchildren, Vietnamese people are deeply attached to the homeland and culture.

3.2. Imperialism

Settler colonialism is connected to imperialism through its enterprise of domination and exploitation both historically and contemporarily. Critical refugee studies have focused on the interrogation of imperialism and use queer and feminist critiques to identify, deconstruct, and analyze the violence that underlies the term "refugee" (Espiritu, 2006, 2014). This theoretical framework challenges discourses that implicitly or explicitly justify racial and gender hierarchies and US militarism in Vietnam and beyond. The extant literature focuses on how refugee nationalism, memory, assimilation, and identity are inextricably linked to war (Espiritu, 2006, 2014; Sahara, 2012) and to the institutions, governmental and non-governmental, that have affected refugees' resettlement experiences.

Specific to the Vietnamese community, Ngo (2016a) writes about how frameworks of meaning-making are deeply rooted in the events and effects of the Cold War. She discusses how the identities we occupy continue to be grounded in our experiences of being participants, victims, and witnesses to the civil war in Vietnam as part of the larger international Cold War conflicts (Ngo, 2016a). Cold War epistemology is an area of scholarship primarily by Asian scholars who interrogate the enduring knowledge production of Self and Other in Asians and Americans (Chen, 2010; Kim, 2010). According to Ngo (2016a) "it theorizes the ongoing impact of colonialism, imperialism, and the Cold War on the psyches and subject formation of Asian people and nations globally" (p. 68). Western imperialism in East and Southeast Asia has been carried out with the objective of "containing communism" as a physical and ideological threat to neoliberal democracy (Ngo, 2016a). Ngo (2016a) describes how this Cold War epistemology and related discourse exists beyond a historical event or series of events and has oozed into the psyche of the US/Western colonizer and Asian subjects.

Chen (2010) discusses the persistent impacts of Asian subjectivity and states that "the complex effects of the war, mediated through our bodies, have been inscribed into our national, family, and personal histories. In short, the Cold War is still alive within us" (p.118). This critical perspective provides a context for analyzing

the social relations between the Vietnamese diaspora and the State that centers the Cold War. For it is the Cold War that brought waves of Vietnamese people to Canada to begin with and this political history continues to shape how the nation state and Vietnamese people relate to one another (Ngo, 2016a). According to Kim (2010), "Cold War compositions are at once a geopolitical structuring, an ideological writing, and a cultural imagining" (p.11).

As a result of this ideological positioning, the Vietnamese (as anti-communist) are considered "compositional subjects," which can only be "visible" and "intelligible" in Canada through an understanding of the Cold War (Ngo, 2016a). This has led to conflict within the Vietnamese community as one specific Vietnamese subject is legitimized, while other identities are discursively excluded (Ngo, 2016b). Vietnamese American literature has called for more critical and nuanced analyses of Vietnamese refugee resettlement and political engagement in North America given the heterogenous socioeconomic and political positionings (Ngo, 2016b) and different pathways to citizenship (Bloemraad, 2006). The bodies of grateful refugees are scarred by the actions and consequences of the Cold War which continue to significantly affect the lives of people who have internalized the racist and imperialist conceptualizations of their bodies as subjugated persons who had to be rescued and given their humanity (Kim, 2010).

Espiritu (2006) examined the use of the Cold War and specifically the war in Vietnam as a meaning-making tool for the US, specifically the "we-win-even-when-we-lose" syndrome. She posits that American militarism was justified for the liberation of savage others in Vietnam, which is the same justification used in present conflicts such as the war in Iraq and Syria. As such, the War in Vietnam in the US imagination is simultaneously obscured and justified by the discourse of saving racially inferior others with the enforcement of so-called democracy and the "gift of freedom" (Nguyen, 2012).

Furthermore, Woan (2008) identifies the history of imperialism in Asia and its transgenerational effects as the roots of inequality for diasporic Asian women as we continue to be affected by colonial stereotypes. She introduces the theory of white sexual imperialism, in which rape and war have constructed the stereotype of hypersexualized Asian women. This is linked to Asian fetishization and white supremacy in North America beginning with the first wave of Chinese men migrating to work on the transcontinental railroad. Chinese women were excluded based on racist concerns of venereal disease (yellow peril) and being a threat to White civilization (Chan, 1991). So, while Asian women are perceived as deviant, foreign, and thus desirable, they are also a threat and this led to the exclusion of Chinese and other Asian women from migrating via the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was not repealed until the 1940s. In this context, we are dehumanized, objects for consumption and this is reinforced in contemporary Western media and films where we are often reduced to a sexual fetish or the sexual model minority.

Imperialism and colonialism in Asia have led to the commodification of our bodies and historical and contemporary violence against Asian women. From being harassed on the street to being raped and murdered we continue to be targeted in ways that repeat the atrocities committed during imperial wars. According

to Woan (2008), "the Western world's desire for imperialistic domination over Asia relates to its desire for sexual domination over Asian women" (p. 301). White sexual imperialism provides an explanation for the inequality and violence Asian women across the globe face during contemporary times. This imperialist regime is the foundation for Asian women's experiences of sexual-racial oppression. If left unaddressed, violence against Asian women will continue to be perpetrated by White men and others while Asian women will continue to be seen through the lens of a hyper-sexualized stereotype. Woan (2008) further suggests that the intersection of imperialism and colonialism will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the oppression of Asian women.

3.3. Racialization

The façade of an innocent and neutral Canada has been chipped away at by the extant scholarship in critical multiculturalism. The inclusion of Cold War epistemology provides an opportunity for a deepened analysis of Vietnamese Canadians in relation to the state and nation building exercises. Critical theorists of Canadian multiculturalism have interrogated the strategies of Canada's nation-building as a white settler colonial project, including the construction and reproduction of the "desirable" vs. the "undesirable Other" (Bannerji, 2000; Thobani, 2007). Specifically, Indigenous peoples, racialized people, immigrants, and newcomers have been constructed as existing outside of the nation in multiple ways. In doing so, Canadian multiculturalism is employed as a governing tool whereby those who are not included in the nation are controlled and managed to serve the nation but to never fully belong within it (Ngo, 2016b). It is no coincidence that the federal government's implementation of multiculturalism as an official state ideology in 1972 happened at the same time as the Vietnam War and the mass exodus of Southeast Asian people. It was during this time that Canada shifted from being an overtly racist nation state to a pluralistic one (Beiser, 1999), supporting the constructed narrative of Canada as a tolerant and fair nation.

Similar to policies such as the *Indian Act*, racist immigration policies supported the maintenance of a privileged White national population with rights and access to resources, which non-White people were excluded from (Thobani, 2007; Maiter, 2009). From Confederation up to the 1970s, immigration laws limited admission to White people (Thobani, 2007). Non-White groups were considered "intruders" whose "inherent deviant tendencies" threatened the existence of the nation (Thobani, 2007, p. 75). Even though the discourse of legislation changed over time, the purpose of these policies was government control over the population. Racism was codified in immigration policies, including the 1885 *Chinese Immigration Act*. The Act included a head tax, which increased by 10 times over 3 years, which the federal government profited from while stopping the movement of Chinese people. Amendments to the *Immigration Act* were made, adding new reasons for denying entry and deportation such psychopathic inferiority and illiteracy to hide the blatant racism of the policies.

Racialization is understood as the circumstances by which certain social characteristics and behaviors come to be identified with race. The construction of the Vietnamese community

as exceptional refugees occurred in the 1980s to support Canada's nation building project by maintaining their international reputation as a leader in humanitarian rescue and refuge (Ngo, 2016b). The humanitarian effort to resettle people forcibly displaced during the Vietnam War is an exceptional case as no other group of refugees has since been resettled in such large numbers. Because of this government actors, politicians, journalists, and legal and health professionals were interested in their lived experiences. This resulted in cooperation across all levels of government and the voluntary/private sector and policy or service reports that informed supporting newly resettled Vietnamese people (Knowles, 1997). Most of the extant literature is primarily focused on acculturation into Western society. Historically, these discourses reproduced the notion of Asian people as foreigners on a pathway to assimilation (Yu, 2002). Recent research has interrogated narratives of freedom and the model minority myth, while contesting the cultural biases of assimilationist frameworks while centering experiences of economic exploitation, institutional and structural racial discrimination, and other systems of oppression (Nguyen-Vo, 2005; Nguyen, 2021; Peche et al., 2022).

Another layer is Canada's colonial myth that has reinforced and continues to reinforce the construction and narrative of Canada as a vast, unoccupied nation founded by French and British colonial settlers. This myth serves to silence and erase Indigenous claims to sovereignty and the land, as well as the history of Black indentured people, Chinese laborers, and racialized settlers. Ngo (2016b) discusses the ways in which these communities have contributed enormously to the nation state in material, cultural, social, and political ways, yet their histories are minimized as their descendants continue to experience racism and xenophobia as outsiders to the nation. Specific to the Vietnamese community, the discourse of them being exceptional refugees is an integral part of the reproduction of multiculturalism as it holds them up as legitimate refugees compared to other racialized groups who are constructed as illegitimate and therefore undeserving refugees (Ngo, 2016b; Nguyen, 2021).

4. Who am I in relation to this work?

I identify as a Southeast Asian queer woman living in the settler colonial nation state known as Canada. I was born and raised in Tkaronto/Toronto and currently reside there. My immediate and extended family are from Vietnam. Our ethnic and ancestral lineage is Teo Chew. Although I have visited Vietnam, I have never lived there. I was the first born in Canada, 6 years after my family arrived. I was raised by my parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Throughout my life I have struggled with my identity and culture. My experiences of my racial identity were focused on how I looked as well as my ethnic identity. I have been told to go back to where I come from too many times to count. I did not speak English when I entered the colonial education system so children teased me, and teachers continually underestimated me. I was one of the only few Asian girls at school and I felt out of place and different. I was excluded and bullied for being Asian and remember hating being Chinese and Vietnamese. This made me angry. I felt ugly with the implicit meaning that I did not fit within dominant, Eurocentric beauty standards, and then when I grew

up was objectified, exotified, and sexualized as an Asian woman. My parents expected me to succeed academically, and I felt a lot of pressure to perform. Professionally, my accomplishments and successes have been devalued and attributed to my racial identity based on the model minority myth.

What my family and community survived—from the war, to planning their escape, to time spent in a refugee camp, to resettlement—demonstrates that telling the truth about our lived experiences may result in death. As a child, I learned to remain silent and invisible as a means of survival. Sadly, this meant I engaged in assimilative practices, such as performing whiteness. I began to lose my Chinese and Vietnamese cultures as I grew up. I have spent years healing from internalized racism and issues surrounding belonging, and it is an ongoing process. I started asking my family questions about our history, about our identities and our cultures. As of late I have been spending time reconnecting to my culture and have been working as a social worker in the community serving Vietnamese people seeking mental health support. It has been such a meaningful experience to come full circle and to be able to hear the stories of folks who are willing to share the things we do not talk about.

In the Canadian context, I do not fit into the Indigenous/settler binary. I did not choose to be born here. I was only born here because my parents met for the first time in Chinatown in downtown Toronto one fateful day 2 years after their separate arrivals. It is difficult for me to see myself as a settler because my family were forcibly displaced due to colonialism and imperialism. I recognize the parallel yet distinct processes of colonial violence and struggle for decolonization that my family faced and that which Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island face. I understand us to have more shared experiences, such as colonialism and imperialism, rather than differences. At the same time, I am conscious of how this represents a move to innocence (Tuck and Yang, 2012). These are complex issues I am still navigating and the only thing I am sure of is the sense of placelessness that I feel and embody. Where do I belong? Neither here nor there.

5. Methodology

Critical race theory (CRT; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012) traces racism through the legacy of slavery, the Civil Rights movement, and contemporary events, including the dynamic ways racism and white supremacy are perpetuated through institutions and policies. CRT focuses on the construction of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression, including law and policies, research and education, language, literature and film, and art and media. Specifically, it describes how targets of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and how we can represent ourselves to systems through counterstories. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on social activism and transforming everyday notions of race, racism, and power through resistance and an intersectional approach. I decided to engage in a critical autoethnography to center my voice and counterstory to mainstream narratives which erase the lingering effects of imperialism, colonialism, and racism among the Vietnamese diaspora.

The extant literature positions autoethnography written by people who have been/are colonized as "[troubling] the concepts and categories we breathe in, think through and live in" (Dutta,

2018, p. 95). The analysis is rooted in lived experiences and thus amplifies the silenced voices of those of us who are underrepresented and oppressed (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p. 3). In this way, autoethnography not only highlights the realities of colonization but also "offers a critically reflexive tool for decolonizing" (Dutta, 2018, p. 96). Grounded in the work of Frantz Fanon, Chawla and Atay (2018) explain how autoethnography can be decolonizing for both the colonized and colonizer. Through our narratives those of us who identify as colonized speak back to colonizing systems of power while speaking to colonizers or settler colonizers. This provides an opportunity for colonizers to engage in a deep process of self-reflection, in which the negative impact of colonization is recognized alongside the unearned advantages they have (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p. 5–6).

Through a critical autoethnography, which, "...describes or analyzes personal experiences to better understand a cultural event," (Croucher and Cronn-Mills, 2015, p. 137) I describe and analyze my lived experience as a descendant of forcibly displaced Vietnamese people of Chinese ancestry living in a settler colonial nation state. I selected this critical qualitative method, as my experience was affected by imperialism, global colonialism, and systemic racism. I focused on an autoethnography in response to the lack of visibility of second-generation Chinese-Vietnamese experiences and the silence which shrouds the Vietnamese community, which has been isolating. In addition, in response to epistemic injustices experienced by my community I am centering my voice in my research. My hope is that sharing my experience will be powerful and meaningful for those who are part of the Vietnamese diaspora.

Critical theory is a theoretical paradigm rooted in the study of power. Specifically, critical theory is often used as a lens to examine the exertion of power, as well as the symbiotic relationship between oppression and privilege. The purpose of this is to shine a light on power differentials and the maintenance of the status quo on a cultural level. Critical theory is applied to critique reality, identify the failings, relating them back to the concept of power, and then to discuss the ways in which power is misused. It is a theory that has been used to discuss concepts of social and cultural identity such as race, gender, and class (Dimock and Cole, 2016). As such, this critical autoethnography was guided by the following research questions:

- To what extent do assumptions about Vietnamese refugees represent a socio-political climate in which migration is set out as particular problems requiring a legal and policing solution?
- How have we and how can we resist systemic violence while promoting collective liberation, considering the discursive and on-the-ground effects of racist, colonial, and imperial policies and practice?

6. The critical autoethnography

6.1. Private sponsorship and the surveillance of Vietnamese refugees

The 1976 Immigration Act allowed for the private sponsorship of refugees to be facilitated following the end of the war in Vietnam. The policy allowed for charities, non-profit organizations, or a

group of five individual citizens to sponsor a refugee family by providing them with a place to stay, supporting them with securing employment, or enrolling them in academic studies (Knowles, 1997). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, about 7,000 private sponsor groups supported the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in Canada. Between 1979 and 1980, during the second wave of migration from Vietnam, Canada resettled over 60,000 refugees from Indochina, with 57% of refugees being privately sponsored (Van Haren, 2021). People from this group, like my family, mostly fled the country aboard overcrowded and dilapidated boats, and as such all Vietnamese refugees were referred to as "boat people." Ethnic Chinese people made up 70% of the boat people (Koh, 2016).

Since 1994, the private sponsorship of refugees comprises 25–40% of Canada's annual total resettlement rates (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2016), demonstrating the Canadian public's proactive participation in private refugee resettlement. Each province or territory was provided with a relocation quota based on their representation of the total population of Canada (Hou, 2021). Those who arrived in the second and third wave were farmers, fishermen, merchants or former military members from small provinces and rural areas. They arrived at a severe economic disadvantage in terms of English proficiency and marketable job skills. Many people experienced physical violence and psychological trauma from their journey by boat and their time spent in refugee camps, physical and psychological distress from re-education camps, and the pain of losing or being separated from loved ones (Lee, 2015).

When my father has spoken about the private sponsorship experience, he identifies some issues with the process, including cultural differences, language, education, a lack of job skills, and resettling in a different climate than Vietnam. He shared that the government matched funds that people were contributing meaning the government would sponsor one refugee for each one sponsored privately. What ends up happening is that private sponsorship creates tension between the government and sponsors over selection control and numbers, which are divergent. While sponsors support people above and beyond the government's commitments, sponsors have faced administrative and regulatory changes that result in them having to do more with less, and the knowledge that overall resettlement will reduce if they are not able to support more people (Labman, 2016). In this way, the government can place the blame on sponsors for not filling the gap while constructing a narrative that resettlement is not important nor supported by Canadian citizens (Labman, 2016).

My family have shared that private sponsors could take referrals for people they wanted to sponsor. This would usually include family members of people who were originally sponsored so that they could reunite with loved ones. Unfortunately, this stopped in 2002 when the government canceled the Assisted Relative Class of sponsorship to control who could become a citizen of Canada. My father worked as an interpreter when he arrived in Canada, and he noticed that the government had specific categories for choosing whom to sponsor which were quite strict. People had to be a certain age (employability) and they wanted to limit larger family sizes and married people. There was a preference of single men or women so they would secure employment as the government did not want to support a whole family. The government or private

sponsors provided financial support for 1 year or until people became employed. However, this was a temporary fix to larger systemic issues.

My family wanted to gain employment quickly so they would not be dependent on their sponsors. We crammed three generations into one house for the first couple of decades since this is what we were used to in Vietnam, and we could not afford to live separately. The government would send agents to check in on people once a week, while my family's sponsor checked in with them regularly over the first few months. I struggle with this as I see this as surveillance however, my family has spoken about how connections were created between refugees and their sponsors. They shared their experiences of going to church with their sponsors, cottages, and family parties. In this way, private sponsorship transforms everyday interactions with refugees affecting the ways in which citizens understand themselves in relation to refugees. On the other hand, if people were sponsored by the government, they checked in, paying close attention to make sure their basic needs were met. Because Vietnamese refugees were considered stateless at the time, they could not be deported, but now people who emigrate could be deported or stripped of their citizenship.

My family were expected to secure employment and become financially independent. They took on low paying jobs and some members decided to return to school. From a young age, my parents encouraged my sister and I to go to school to advance our careers. My father and I have discussed the eternally good, grateful, and deserving refugee trope (Espiritu, 2006, 2014; Moulin, 2012; Nguyen, 2012), which is particularly prominent among literature and media about Vietnamese refugees in the Canadian context (Nguyen, 2013, 2018; Ngo, 2016b). We are constructed as grateful for being rescued from political persecution and being given an opportunity to rebuild and resettle, yet many of us resent the US government for abandoning South Vietnam, which led them to become refugees in the first place. Among the community, many people distrust democratic institutions, which they blame for the demise of South Vietnam. There is tension between my family and I as the survivors of the war are truly grateful for Canada and being able to resettle in this nation after almost losing their lives. On the other hand, I can only focus on the harms that the Canada had done to us, Indigenous peoples, and other racialized communities. My father talks about how there was no support system in Vietnam at that time, and that there was a better social support system in Canada. As such, they chose to go to Canada as they would have had to wait longer to get to the US where my extended family wanted to go because of the climate. Despite everything, my family would still choose Canada as the US is perceived as overtly racist and because they went and started a war in Vietnam and then left when they were defeated.

6.2. Erasure of our experiences

To this day, I still feel the distinct reality of being Chinese and Vietnamese while not quite being a part of either community. My family used to share snippets of stories of what it was like being ethnically Chinese in Vietnam. They were discriminated against,

restricted to living in certain areas, and forced to speak Vietnamese. People of Chinese descent were killed for speaking up. When they decided they could no longer live in Vietnam my uncle was the first to leave as they could only secure one spot due to circumstances beyond their control. I grew up feeling resentful of my family for not sharing more about our journey sooner, however I now understand this silence because it is too painful to recall those memories. Some families were wiped out, there is a mistrust of the government, and people resent Americans and their action in Vietnam. When pressed for more information there is a limit, and my family often talks about the need to move on and forget about it. In the past, they did not want family members to worry since they have already been through so much. This has carried on to contemporary times, so we tend to keep our struggles to ourselves. This silence and the erasure of our experiences has been hard for me to navigate. While I understand why, it pains me that so much is left unsaid and therefore assumptions are made about each other opening the scars of the wounds from the war and our life in Canada.

In our community, there is the need to show face by demonstrating social mobility, success, happiness, and independence from the State, hiding the realities of poverty, violence, grief, and subjugation from external forces. As a result of this, I have struggled with intergenerational trauma and mental health and well-being because of the pressure to be successful academically and professionally and the barriers I have faced along the way. I feel an immense pressure to do all the things my parents did not have the opportunity to do. I am aware that succumbing to this pressure reproduces the stereotypes of refugees as hard-working people who can pull themselves up by the bootstraps and become responsible, wage-earning citizens. I do not want to feed into the idea of Canada as a successful multicultural state with fair immigration policies. When we participate in this system, we become citizens of the nation state as we move closer in proximity to whiteness—the cultural, legal, and aesthetic norms of the settler colonial nation. Ultimately, these frameworks position refugees as people who are rejected from and desire admittance to the property owning, heteropatriarchal family of Canada's liberal, multicultural society (Nguyen, 2021). While we may put forth images of success and happiness this erases our vulnerability to and realities of racism and systemic violence while reproducing a colonial, nationalist script. This script and the idea of Canada is a place that is free and fair for refugees conceals the ways in which racialized people from the Global South are excluded and regularly blocked from obtaining a visa to get to Canada. Despite this, many racialized migrants have resisted the categories imposed on them by the white supremacist, settler colonial nation state.

6.3. Resisting systemic violence

While the refugee camps were violent and despairing places where people were up against policies and processes beyond their control Vietnamese refugees were not completely powerless, hopeless, or passive. Beyond a survival strategy, Vietnamese refugees resisted against the settler colonial state which is organized to exclude and exploit migrants. While my family and community

could not control the selection criteria of settler colonial nation states and were subject to racist policies and decisions, they were able to push back by using their knowledge and connections to cross borders and achieve their desired settlement outcomes. My family recalls speaking to others at the refugee camps to gain information which would then be used to construct stories and identities that would be desirable to Canada. This included changing their birth year, relationships to one another on paper, and embellishing family histories to fit into the ideal that the state was searching for.

Ngo (2016b) writes about challenging the claims of North American rescue and liberation and the humanitarian rhetoric of North American government actors. When my mother arrived in Montreal, she was told to throw her old clothes away and she was hosed down with disinfectant and then given new clothes as if doing so would change anything about her that was seen as undesirable. While nationalist discourses use refugee journeys to demonstrate the West's benevolence and the success of liberal humanist frameworks of justice and freedom, there are stories that do not allow us to celebrate the exaltation of the refugee figure into a welcoming, multicultural city. Instead, these stories show a multiculturalism that does not affirm the lives of postcolonial immigrants and racialized people as it claims. My family recalls how they realized they were racialized people or other when they were out and about and experienced racial discrimination—for example, they would get rude stares, people shouted profanities at them as they went to work, and neighbors would damage their belongings. My father speaks about how White people were skeptical of foreigners in a small town, in which there were mostly White people living. He shared that language and cultural barriers prevented them from making friends with White locals, but they befriended other Asians in the community, such as a Pakistani family, due to cultural similarities. Eventually, my family decided to move to Toronto since there was a Chinatown where they experienced more subtle forms of racism in Toronto as well as more diversity.

A big source of tension between my family and me has been my need to name systemic violence and my knowledge of Canada as a settler colonial nation. While my family understands both to be true, they often expect me to remain silent to protect whatever sense of safety and security they have been afforded because of living in Canada. I struggle with this because my family was born in a country that has resisted colonial and imperial violence for centuries. After they were granted asylum a year or so after the war's formal end, most of them entered a life of low-wage, manual labor, despite going to and being successful in postsecondary education. Although later in life, they were able to secure work that was not so hard on their bodies, there were generally very few opportunities for advancement, so they have lived relatively modest lives. Even though discourses of upward mobility after temporary struggle for refugees are prevalent, their lives were deeply structured by socio-economic and racial, as well as sexual, marginalization. Furthermore, racial capitalism, or the co-constitution of modern capitalism and processes of slavery, genocide, racial hierarchy, invasion, and settlement, prolongs the search for refuge, creating persistent forms of economic, racial, and physical displacement.

6.4. Engaging in collective liberation

There is a history of social activism in South Vietnam, which includes mutual aid societies, school clubs, professional societies, and philanthropic and civic organizations (Nguyen-Marshall, 2022). My family and community's experiences have demonstrated that refugees have resisted and organized politically to better their living conditions in refugee camps or in the nation states they were resettled in (Nguyen, 2013). My family tells the story of how as soon as they arrived at the camp, they sent letters to other camps to look for family members so they could be reunited and to demonstrate they had family connections to the government. As I mentioned earlier, they had conversations about where they would like to end up, adjusting their stories to meet the requirements of each nation's immigration policies. The government of Canada helped my family find my uncle who was the first to leave Vietnam and eventually thy met him in Kuala Lumpur at the Canadian transition camp.

Starting from the time they left Vietnam my family focused their time and energy on relationship building and engaged in activities that supported our family and community. There were growing Vietnamese communities which comprised networks of family and friends who supported one another in their journeys during and after leaving Vietnam and the refugee camps. My father told me that Vietnamese people who came before 1975 could not return so they volunteered to help. This included professionals who are highly educated and organized groups of people to give them guidance on their new life in Canada and information on how to navigate the city, from everything as basic as how to cross the street to how to secure employment. There was a Vietnamese Association, a non-profit, that provided ESL classes and supported people looking for work, job placement, skills training and taking them to the doctor. They also provided translation and interpretation services. My father went on to become a social worker to further support the Vietnamese community and disadvantaged populations in Canada.

What I have observed is that my family and community are healing alongside the Vietnamese diaspora through various forms of social networks, which are both formal and informal. We have provided support to each other in a multitude of ways on an ongoing basis. We have benefitted from existing community resources and networks whether navigating the resettlement process, supporting business operations, or in political participation and activism. We have engaged in extensive transnational social networks and civic engagement experiences that have shaped the cultural, economic, and politic life of the diaspora through the generations. We recreated a sense of home in a place where we were never meant to be. In terms of spirituality, my grandparents are prominent members of a Chinese Buddhist Society and have engaged in ancestor worship over the past 40 years. On the other hand, intra-community conflicts exist. Ngo (2019a) has discussed the ways in which Vietnamese refugees negotiate their sense of identity and community in a multicultural nation state and how this is affected by significant political forces including the Cold War legacy and settler colonial nation building defining who and what is a refugee.

7. Discussion

Multiculturalism as a discourse reproduces the colonial project of white settler societies through the inclusion and exclusion of racialized people. This is carried out through colonialism, imperialism, and racialization which is meant to divide and conquer Indigenous, Black, Asian, and other racialized people. As described earlier, in the late 1970s, 60,000 refugees from Southeast Asia entered Canada—this was the first time that the nation state had admitted a substantial number of racialized refugees. At the same time, this period is also signified by the height of postwar Canadian nationalism and attempts to project an image of liberal inclusion, which was followed by state-sanctioned multiculturalism in 1971. However, this national identity failed to address racial discrimination, including discrimination directed toward Asian immigrants from the mid-19th century up to the arrival of Southeast Asian refugees in the 1970s. While Canada's Cold War politics are informed by these unresolved traumas, the intersections between the experiences of Vietnamese refugees and the Cold War remain largely ignored by the nation state.

Ngo (2019b) examined the discourses of democracy and communism, which she describes as remains of the Cold War, and demonstrates how the concept of democracy is conflated with liberal freedom. Specifically, freedom of development and trade and the ways in which this freedom is interconnected to capitalism. In this way, capitalism is used to protect and increase the prosperity and security of the nation state, while ignoring the reality that Canada is a settler colonial nation which exists on stolen land. According to Ngo (2019b), in the mainstream, the Cold War binary is seen as democracy vs. communism, however in reality the binary is capitalism vs. communism. This discursive move works to render capitalism invisible to Canadian national identity. Ngo (2019b) adds that racism is also a key feature of this national identity. Racism continues to exist in Canada, yet the interconnected systems of oppression which uphold white supremacy on the foundation of colonialism and capitalism work to block attempts to name it and to redress it. As such, systemic racism in the forms of social, economic, and political exclusion continues unabated.

Recently, there was a move to enact the Journey to Freedom Day (Bill S-219), a national day commemorating the mass exodus of Vietnamese refugees and their acceptance in Canada (Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2015, p.1). The Canadian narrative contradicts Vietnam's National Day of Reunification, and Vietnamese Canadians expressed their reluctance to support this bill suggesting that the date be changed to July 27, 1979—the day Canada officially committed to admitting 50,000 refugees. Ngo (2016a) posits that this bill constructs Vietnamese people as a political subject in tension with those who identify otherwise and contributes to the erasure of the American war in Vietnam by reproducing discourses of freedom while concealing Canada's participation and complicity in the war. For example, Canada provided monitoring and surveillance at the demilitarized zone in Vietnam (Bothwell, 2000).

Canada's role in the Vietnam War went beyond surveillance, as Nguyen (2013) states: "it must be remembered that while Canada did not join the fighting effort, it acted as the chief arms supplier to the U.S., providing resources and materials that fuelled combat and drove the war economy" (p. 25). Canada produced traditional and chemical weapons that killed millions of Vietnamese civilians (Nguyen, 2018). The Journey to Freedom Day bill attempts to uphold Canada's "national mythologies" of innocence (Dua et al., 2005), which are employed to "erase the history of colonization, slavery, and discriminatory immigration legislation" (p. 1). A focus on freedom and discourses of Vietnamese exceptionality continues to have devastating effects on survivors, who continue to struggle with transgenerational trauma, chemical poisoning, the destruction of kinship ties, and the loss of spiritual and material resources (Ngo, 2016a).

I have continued to wrestle with identity, belonging, and community building as I attempt to come to peace with our past. I have struggled due to the erasure of the war in Vietnam and the deliberate forgetting of the conditions which resulted in the exodus and war-created refugees. This ontology of forgetting is part of the larger nation-building project (Thobani, 2007). The focus on our journey to freedom conceals the American atrocities of the war, from the carpet bombing of entire regions of Vietnam, the My Lai massacre, the napalm attacks, the broad unrestrained use of Agent Orange poison, and to the still active land mines which remain largely uncovered (Espiritu, 2014). In this context, Ngo (2016a) argues that social policy is used as a tool for nation building and as a method of knowledge production which upholds and reproduces subject positions, thus contributing to the context of conflict within groups.

My father and I have discussed the programs that the government developed and the reality that not all the programs were helpful as they were not tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of refugees. For example, there needed to be a specific support system for language training geared toward certain segments of the population, e.g., tailoring services to people and their specific needs such as elders. English as a Second Language was a one stop shop which was not helpful because of varying degrees of English proficiency and upbringing (some people in Vietnam were well educated and could speak English). My father identified a lack of support for the elderly regarding housing and health care, which was a small population because elders chose to stay in Vietnam since they were near the end of their life and did not want to start all over again in a foreign nation. There was almost no support for post-traumatic stress disorders and people were left to heal on their own, which many did not have time to do as they had to focus on working to survive. In addition to this, there were barriers and challenges in accessing adequate healthcare services compared to people who were citizens. Overall, people were excluded from decision-making processes about issues that directly affected them. Instead of relying on private or non-profit agencies, the government should have supported community-led organizations to develop communication campaigns, the provision of essential services, conduct contact tracing, and to support the development of social norms.

7.1. Assumptions about Vietnamese refugees and surveillance by the state

Through an analysis of my lived experiences and those of my family and community, I have countered assumptions made about Vietnamese refugees in Canada, including: the construction of the grateful refugee, the model minority myth, and the perpetual foreigner stereotype. These assumptions work to maintain control of the Vietnamese diaspora by rendering experiences of systemic discrimination invisible while reproducing the idea that Vietnamese people are racialized others who do not belong to Canada but should be eternally grateful for refuge. Pfeifer (1999) discussed temporal themes in the mainstream media's portrayal of Vietnamese people focusing on media coverage in Toronto, Canada from 1979 to 1996. Initially, the coverage detailed the perilous journey of the boat people from fleeing Vietnam to the conditions of refugee camps. These stories worked to garner support for refugees and increased the number of private sponsorships. In response to public anxiety over potential negative societal impacts because of admitting large numbers of Vietnamese refugees, newspapers started to publish pieces focused on the economic contributions of previous waves of refugees. As a result, we were dehumanized and reduced to bodies for labor, particularly manual, low-income labor. At the same time, several mainstream publications raised concerns about the high expense and potential impact of the "Boat People" upon the job market, the low-income housing sector, public health, and the social service delivery system (Pfeifer, 1999).

In the 1980s, there was a predominant focus on assimilation issues and experiences relating to systemic discrimination among Vietnamese refugees, which included "culture shock," language difficulties, mental health problems, unemployment, and youth gangs (Pfeifer, 1999). Pfeifer (1999) identified the persistent reference to people of Vietnamese descent as "refugees" and "boat people" as a common theme in the articles, which started during the 1980s and has continued in media coverage of stories involving the Vietnamese population to this very day. At what point do we stop being refugees and when will we belong or be considered Canadian? Mainstream discourses reproduce the assumptions of the grateful refugee, the model minority, and the perpetual foreigner by discussing individual achievements and our ability to overcome significant adversities.

During the 1990s mainstream discourses about the Vietnamese diaspora shifted to focus on criminal activity and this has continued in contemporary times. Pfeifer (1999) showed that publications mostly discussed Vietnamese involvement in crime while a smaller number focused on Vietnamese-community activists opposing the collection of race-based crime statistics in the early 1990s, protests concerning media portrayals and police mistreatment, the lack of funding for Vietnamese social service organizations, and experiences of prejudice, racism, and violence directed toward Vietnamese people by representatives of the criminal justice system, the labor market, and schools. There were several articles that focused on narratives of the model minority myth, sharing the story of Vietnamese people who achieved upward mobility and youth who excelled academically.

The mainstream media is a key institution, which promotes racialization processes through the reproduction of dominant discourses. Pfeifer (1999) demonstrates that frequent references to Vietnamese individuals accused of involvement in criminal activity appeared in mainstream Toronto newspapers. He identifies three elements in media coverage that have supported the formation and perpetuation of negative stereotypes and the racialization of the Vietnamese diaspora in public consciousness. These include identifying the race of racialized people in newspaper stories relating to criminal activity and deportation when it is not relevant, the assumption of cultural factors as explanations for criminal behavior among the Vietnamese community and the correlation made between incidents involving Vietnamese people and Toronto neighborhoods, specifically Chinatown, Parkdale, and Jane-Finch, and often negative public connotations.

Vietnamese Canadians have experienced prejudice, discrimination, and mistreatment in their interactions with representatives of the criminal justice system in the Toronto area, specifically law enforcement officers (Pfeifer, 1999). The police have harassed Vietnamese people, asking for their identity in various situations. This harassment also extends to mall security staff and false accusations of shoplifting. Language barriers exacerbate these issues, from being charged with crimes because of an inability to communicate effectively with law enforcement in English to lawyers not adequately explaining court processes and being pushed to plead guilty. These realities combined with mainstream discourses about the Vietnamese diaspora demonstrate that the assumptions and stereotypes of Vietnamese refugees represent a sociopolitical climate in which migration is constructed as an issue requiring a legal and policing solution to control Vietnamese bodies.

7.2. Challenging coloniality

Negative attitudes and behaviors toward immigrants are a result of democratic racism (Henry et al., 2006), which prevents the government from truly embracing differences or making substantial changes to the existing social, economic, and political order. It also prevents them from supporting policies and practices that might disrupt the status quo, as these policies are understood as in conflict with and a threat to liberal democracy (Guo, 2010). There is a need to dismantle discriminatory policies and barriers through an inclusive framework that values all human knowledge and experiences. An example is the interrogation of the points system and the Eurocentric recognition of Canadian equivalency using white supremacist measurement criteria which claims to be objective, but is not. These are issues I teach students about in my role as a post-secondary educator who teaches at a colonial institution. I engage my students in critical conversations about colonization and its connection to white supremacy, racism, and capitalism—linking local issues to global issues. We talk about the ways in which colonialism manifests in the educational system and knowledge production. As a social work educator, I teach students about the roots of social work as a colonial profession that was and continues to be complicit and to participate in the systemic oppression of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized communities such as through the child welfare system.

I recognize that decolonization is not a metaphor (Tuck and Yang, 2012), rather it is a social and political process that seeks to recover and re-establish marginalized cultural knowledge, practices, and identity (Smith, 1999). As such, I am unlearning and relearning as an ongoing, lifelong process. I am also engaged in reconnecting to ancestral worldviews, teachings, and practices and encourage students to do so as well. I teach with the goal of resisting epistemic injustices and epistemicide (Santos, 2014). I center knowledge that is culturally relevant to transnational migrants through the diversification of knowledge production and the recognition of plural systems of knowledge (Santos, 2014). Students spend ample time thinking about our complicity in systems of oppression, specifically our participation in a settler colonial nation state, moving toward respect, responsibility, and reciprocity. I speak out about anti-Asian racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, etc. without comparing the different experiences of racism which reproduces racial hierarchies. I understand that while they are different, they are connected through a global white supremacist colonial capitalist project that displaces and dispossesses Indigenous peoples around the world through the theft of land and resource extraction. In the classroom we discuss land back movements and the consideration of Indigenous treaty rights and relations (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

It is of utmost importance to me to develop meaningful and critical relationships between Indigenous peoples and refugees to live alongside one another while developing an ethics of care and accountability to one another (Adese and Phung, 2021). Our claims to Canadian resources such as land, add to the further dispossession of Indigenous peoples. On the other hand, for colonial-capitalist forms of extraction, the perpetuation of a conflictual relationship between Indigenous and immigrant populations fuels the reproduction of the white settler domination. To critically challenge this, it is important to engage in contextual collaboration and solidarities based on the mutual recognition of marginalization and oppression by the same logic of colonial-capitalist extraction (Stanley et al., 2014; Chatterjee, 2018). These solidarities do not have to be complete, unconditional ones, instead they should be based on a responsibility to advance living a dignified life and a nurturing relationship to the realities and knowledge of diverse groups within a non-racist and non-patriarchal framework.

7.3. Challenging imperialism

Recognizing the impact that imperialism has had on the Vietnamese diaspora, we must grieve both individually and collectively. This involves healing from multigenerational trauma and intergenerational conflict within the family and community because of political differences, differences in life experiences, and differences among waves of refugees. Personally, this requires addressing the tension between my parents lived experiences surviving the war and my experiences growing up in Canada. A rupture exists between generations in terms of understanding one another. I feel guilty for not having gone through what my family

did and sadness for the sacrifices they made. There is a lack of a greater discussion of the war in Vietnam, the global contributors of the war, and what led to hundreds of thousands of people fleeing their homes, which erases these realities.

In their discussion of Vietnamese diasporic families, Ly (2019) states that refuge is both materially and discursively geographic by how it promises safety and freedom to exist within the humanist cartography of family and the constructed family of the nation-state. She writes about the ways in which exile and displacement are forms of solitude. Specifically, refugees are distinct from other exiled migrants as their institutionalization as a legal category constitutes recognizable persecution and a violation of human rights (Ly, 2019). Similar to other migrants from nations in the Global South, it is generally understood that refugees are forcibly separated from the family of the nation-state and assumed to desire a sense of belonging in those institutions. As a result of how settler colonial states such as the US and Canada have put parameters on the legal movement into their borders through family reunification policies and private sponsorship from groups such as churches, migrants are made vulnerable to heteronormative and patriarchal regulatory structures (Ly, 2019).

Following the breakdown of the welfare state and the increase in neoliberal policies like the Immigration Act of 1990, as Reddy (2005) suggests, the family unit is often the predominant way migrant gain support and vital services such as employment, health care, and housing. As such, the concept of refuge supports the naturalization of attachments to the liberal humanistic, white supremacist concept of family (Ly, 2019). Ly (2019) discusses how this concept of family, which is heteronormative and homonormative, acts as a framework for refugee sociality, as family is assumed to be lost or broken as a result of displacement and due to the ways in which the state constructs the family as a prerequisite for settlement. The silence and tension within our families is in conflict with the idea of family as a space of safety and belonging.

7.4. Challenging racialization

To subvert racialization and racial hierarchies, the government needs to recognize Vietnamese people as leaders, acknowledging our contributions to our communities and to Canada. As a collective, we must find ways to resist acculturation and assimilationist policies and practices to preserve our culture and traditions. We must create relationships across racial lines to resist racial and ethnic discrimination from Canadians. In addition, there is a need to resist the internalization and reproduction of the racist structures of the Canadian nation state through participation in racist acts even while experiencing discrimination ourselves as members of the Vietnamese diaspora. Engaging in the promotion of our cultural identity and knowledge is crucial to our survival. I seek to resist the model minority stereotype, and, in my classroom, I teach about racism (personal, cultural, systemic/structural) and how it plays out in our everyday life. This involves defining, negotiating, and claiming our own identities while recognizing the multiplicities and complexities of identities and relations within the community, which gets flattened in a multicultural society (Ngo, 2019a). In the Canadian context, solidarity building

with Indigenous and other racialized groups while honoring our differences is so important.

8. Conclusion

Research (e.g., Ngo, 2016a) and my own experiences of community work with local Vietnamese Canadians suggests that we are burdened by trauma, distrust, and war-created divisions. This plays out through familial and community silences and mistrust. My experiences have shown me how important it to address the intersectional issues of resisting imperialism and colonialism, economic justice, accountability, and healing from racialized trauma to create a holistic vision of the conditions that support healthy, equitable, and loving relationships. This involves resistance to ongoing marginalization by naming and addressing systemic discrimination and colonial violence, while healing and cultivating collective care through storytelling, organizing and solidarity, connection, and mutual aid. Resisting ongoing marginalization then becomes a collective responsibility rather than an individual, and the possibilities for deepening relationship and accountability with and for one another in the face of oppression grows.

The last few years of a global pandemic have demonstrated how interconnected our world is and how the legacies of colonialism, war, and economic exploitation continue to reproduce the status quo and disparities in nations in the Global South and even within the borders of the high-income nations in the Global North. This has resulted in the mass migration of refugees and immigrants, including Syrian refugees whose experiences are remarkably similar to those of Vietnamese refugees. Both waves of forced displacement were driven by people who felt unsafe in their home country due to war and escaped violence by fleeing by boat. Future research should focus on the parallels and intersections between the experiences of Vietnamese refugees and contemporary refugees to inform policy and practice. Understanding our lived experiences does not begin with our arrival in Canada, but with our histories from Vietnam. In this way we center the knowledge of Vietnamese people as important sources of information. A major strength of the Vietnamese community are the transnational and international connections to the Vietnamese diaspora across the globe. My family have relationships that extend beyond borders and the boundaries they produce. They are in contact with family and acquaintances who are a part of the diaspora in Canada, the US, and Australia as well as people who live in Vietnam. These relationships transcend geographical and national boundaries. They facilitate the preservation of our culture and identity.

At the same time, they are sites of struggle and rupture. As someone who was born in Canada, I am also a member of a South Vietnamese refugee family of Chinese ethnicity. We have our histories of war, fleeing, and challenging times resettling. This has resulted in internal family conflict and a sense of isolation from others from the greater Vietnamese community. What exacerbates these issues is silence among family members and community members. The things that are left unsaid result in assumptions and feelings of shame, anger, and resentment, which we bury down because we do not feel as though they are important or that our experiences matter (Hong, 2020).

There is a delicate balance of preserving our culture and identity and adapting to Western society to prove ourselves. I have learned to codeswitch between my community and academic/professional spaces. I do not feel like I belong anywhere. As I try to figure out my life, my journey, I work to create a space for myself where I can honor my family's lived experiences while honoring my own unique experience as a second-generation Chinese-Vietnamese person. Part of this includes figuring out what this all means to me and how it affects my family. On the one had I am a part of the collective, but on the other hand I have privileges that my parents never dreamed of when they were on the run. Currently, the media and government have pushed forth concerns about terrorism and national security, and this has led to the problematization of refugees and perception of them as threats. Stroking these state produced fears can allow for extraordinary measures to prevent refugees from settling in Canada, which are supported by the public. As we think of how to support people who have fled their homes or left because they wanted to, we must move away from white supremacist, patriarchal systems of surveillance and the erasure of our experiences. A better route would be to support the development of informal networks of care, following the lead of the community and providing resources while eliminating systemic barriers which prevent them from becoming citizens or having access to education and employment.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the author.

Ethics statement

Ethical approval was not required for the study in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent to participate in this study was not required in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

Author contributions

JM conceptualized and designed the study, conducted the critical autoethnography, interpreted the data, and drafted and revised the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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"They don't care about people; they only care about the money": the effects of border enforcement, commodification and migration industries on the mobility of migrants in transit through Mexico

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How does border enforcement affect the mobility of migrants and refugees in countries of transit? What impact does it have on migrants' bodily experiences of mobility and their reliance on actors of the migration industry? While the externalization of borders affects undocumented people by increasing their vulnerability to violence during transit, the impact of the migration regime on the social construction of inequalities in every-day interactions and its relationship to the capacity for mobility has not been studied in depth. This article intends to bridge this gap: based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted between 2013 and 2019, this article analyzes the relation between immigration enforcement and the mobility strategies of migrants and refugees, particularly women. It focuses on the intertwining of border enforcement and violence and their impact on people's bodily mobility experiences in transit through Mexico along intersecting lines of inequality such as race, class, gender and nationality. First, I analyze how border enforcement contributes to internal bordering, thereby increasing the vulnerability and dependence of migrants on brokers for mobility; second, it looks at the bodily experiences of women in transit and the ways in which internal bordering shapes gendered power hierarchies among actors in the field of mobility. The analysis shows how women negotiate mobility and bodily integrity in social interactions with different actors and how they face constraints resulting from the gendered hierarchies to mobility on routes of transit. Furthermore, it demonstrates how women's bodies have become a privileged site for the construction of a 'body politic' exploitable by others, since border enforcement has contributed to weakening the possibilities of negotiating mobility and bodily integrity in transit.

KEYWORDS

border enforcement, transit migration, mobility, bodily experiences, violence, migration
industries, gender and intersectionality, Mexico

1 Introduction

The massacre of 72 migrants in San Fernando in the northern Mexican State of Tamaulipas in 2010, presumably at the hands of the drug cartel "Los Zetas" (Turati, 2013), the murder of 49 migrants in Cadereyta in the state of Nuevo León in 2012, or the killing of Victoria Salazar, a refugee woman at the hands of police officials during a routine control in

Tulum, Quintana Roo, in 2021 (Lines 2021) are only some examples of the extreme violence to which undocumented migrants and refugees are exposed to in Mexico. There have been reports by national and international human rights organizations, including governmental institutions on the violence experienced by migrants [Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos México (CNDH), 2009; Amnesty International, 2010; Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH), 2011; CIDH, 2013; REDODEM, 2019] and even films on this subject.[1] However, the adverse conditions and violence faced by migrants and, particularly, by women migrants and members of the LGTBIQA+ community in transit have not been adequately addressed by state policies. While extreme forms of violence get extensive coverage in the media, everyday acts of violence on migration routes receive less attention and their impact is rarely acknowledged. In this general context, rapidly changing migration control measures since 2018 have worsened conditions for undocumented migrants, including asylum seekers, and refugees.[2] Central American migrants still make up the largest group of migrants in transit through Mexico, even though over the last few years, people from other nationalities have joined them in increasing numbers, such as Haitian, Cuban, and Venezuelan nationals, as well as extracontinental migrants.[3] Several changes in immigration enforcement—not least in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic— have contributed to tighten border surveillance and deterrence within Mexico, and increased organized crime control over major transit routes (Álvarez Velasco, 2011). While at first glance it might seem that migrants are caught between state control and organized crime control on transit routes, the everyday experiences of migrants and refugees paint a far more complex picture. Immigration enforcement has contributed to change power balances in the field of migration through the promotion of internal bordering practices, and violence is perpetrated by various actors. Traversing Mexico on clandestine routes is an extreme bodily experience as it is marked by physical and psychological stress, by different forms of violence and uncertainty that impact the bodies of migrants. Women, children and members of the LGTBIQA+ community (Barreras Valenzuela and Anguiano-Téllez, 2022), but also men, are confronted with the effects of violent gender regimes (Connell, 1987; Hearn et al., 2020; Walby, 2020), while the geographical space of transit is controlled by diverse groups through physical and symbolic violence (Segato, 2014). In this context, the circumstances of transit seem to become normalized or taken for granted by the actors as a social rule in the field of migration (Bourdieu, 1985).[4] There have been

studies on migrants' experiences of violence while traveling through Mexico (Girardi, 2008; Castro Soto, 2010; Vogt, 2013; Willers, 2016; Brigden, 2018); scholars have also analyzed the particular impact of violence on migrant's bodies in these territories. Girardi (2008) has analyzed how women's bodies in everyday interactions on transit routes cease to be a 'resource of oneself' and run the risk of becoming an "expropriated good" (Girardi, 2008), as it is subject to a "commodification" process (Vogt, 2013) understood as an objectification which "transforms people and their bodies (...) into objects of economic desire" (Sharp, 2000, p. 293). Still people need to move and do so under the most adverse conditions. Therefore, it is important to analyze how people experience and negotiate mobility in conditions of increased immigration enforcement and violence, as this violence not only affects individuals but also has a long-term impact on families and communities.

In this article, I draw on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with Central American women and men to analyze embodied experiences and daily bordering practices along transit routes in Mexico. I analyze how the experiences of women and their mobility strategies are related to internal bordering, especially in relation to "mobility actors" in the field, such as other migrants, migration brokers, members of crime groups and state institution officials. By bodily experiences, I refer to how migration and bordering is experienced through the body and sensations, emotions, and feelings (Longhurst, 1995). This also entails acknowledging the body as a key heuristic concept to understand the experience of migration in its social, political, and relational dimension (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987). To show the social logic of gendered violence and exclusion in this border corridor, this research draws on critical border studies and feminist geographies, as well as a 'new feminist political economy' (Anthias, 2013). Furthermore, my analysis is predicated on a micro-sociological approach based on Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1985, 2007, also Kim, 2018), to show how different positionalities intersect and produce hierarchies of people in terms of their possibilities to access mobility and accessing rights (Mountz et al., 2012; Anthias, 2013; Lutz, 2015). These social positions are also affected by structural and xenophobic violence, racism, and discrimination against outsiders in local communities based on intersecting categories of social inequality, race/ethnicity, class and gender, ability and age, and their meaning in local settings (Anthias, 2013). By analyzing the experiences of women migrants, my objective is to contribute to our understanding of gendered forms of bordering and how the governmentality of migration and the resulting violence in the field are interconnected. Actors in the field comprise a range of individuals who take economic advantage of the need of undocumented migrants to stay put or to move, including government officials, migration brokers, and smugglers, and other service providers. The term 'migration industry' is often used to designate the numerous types of actors involved in mobility who facilitate or constrain migration (Nyberg S1ørensen, 2013). It also refers to the different practices and a wide range of relations

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1   For example "Sin nombre" (Fukunaga, 2009), "Sin Nombre − Life Without Hope" (Mandoki, 2012), "The Golden Dream" (Quemada-Diez, 2013), and documentaries such as "María en tierra de nadie" (Zamora, 2010) by director Marcela Zamora, which depict the living conditions of undocumented Central American migrants in Mexico.

2   In this article I follow an inclusivist definition of migrants, to refer to all people on the move including refugees (see Carling, 2023).

3   Beside other political reasons, these groups have become more visible since the year 2017, the end of the US policy called 'Dry feet, wet feet,' and the end of the policy of issuing "exit trades" to foreigners, which allowed them to leave the country through any border (Torre Cantalapiedra et al., 2021, p. 12).

4   This is resumed by frequent comments such as "Why are they coming if they know what awaits them?" ("¿A qué vienen si ya saben lo que les espera?"), which reverses the victim-victimizer logic, attributing the responsibility for the violence suffered to the victim (for an exhaustive analysis on xenophobic and racist comments in the Mexican media, see Torre Cantalapiedra, 2019).

between these actors and the structures of migration regimes (Nyberg S1ørensen, 2013). Furthermore, migration industries and their actors do not have a fixed identity, but must be viewed in terms of place, time, and power (Lindquist et al., 2012, p. 8). Scholars have criticized the concept of migration industries as it appears to fuel the prevailing notion of unscrupulous and greedy smugglers in public discourse. These critiques have been pointing out that it obscures the impact of deterrence measures promoted by nation-states and multilevel governance which fuel the need for migrants, including refugees, to rely on intermediaries for their mobility (Zhang et al., 2018). At the same time, the concept allows to recognize that "migration industries" are not happening outside the law and are part of the policing of mobility. Therefore, it is critical to understand how migration and border regimes shape the scope of action of actors in the field of undocumented mobility (Zhang et al., 2018) and the productive meaning of violence in current migration and border regimes. The article is structured as follows: First, I review the changes to the migration regime in Mexico over the last decade and the literature relating to the body and migration for the study of violence and mobility. The second part of the article will focus on ethnographic evidence on how women engage with different actors who facilitate mobility to negotiate safety and bodily integrity. Finally, I will discuss how border enforcement has affected the mobility of migrants in recent years.

2 The migration and border regime in the North American migration corridor

As a transit country, Mexico is part of one of the most important transit corridors, with more than 3,000 kilometers from the South to the North in one single country (Feldman et al., 2019; Beirens, 2022). Migration control in Mexico is also marked by the geographic specificities, with a clear north-south divide between immigration control and apprehensions (Torre Cantalapiedra and Yee-Quintero, 2018). As the territory allows easy migration control in its narrowest place, the *Isthmus of Tehuantepec*, most detentions of migrants and checkpoints are concentrated in the Mexican south. In 2019, for example, 70% of all detentions were made in three southern Mexican states: Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz (SEGOB et al., 2019, p. 32). Massive human rights violations and the disappearance of numerous migrants in transit have been documented by national and international human rights organizations [Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH), 2011; CIDH, 2013]. In 2012, the Movimiento Migrante Mesoamericano (Meso-American Migrant Movement) estimated that approximately 70,000 undocumented migrants disappeared on their journey through Mexico (Stinchcomb and Hershberg, 2014, p. 11). Reports by NGOs and government institutions such as the Mexican Human Rights Commission (CNDH, acronym in Spanish) have shown the prevalence of different forms of violence ranging from violent assault, torture, murder, sexual violence and rape, human trafficking, and enslavement to kidnapping and blackmailing of migrants and their families [Amnesty International, 2010; Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH), 2011; CIDH, 2013; REDODEM, 2018, 2019].

In the current restrictive migration and border regime in Mexico, a variety of actors take part in the field of power related

to the mobility of migrants. As a conceptual frame, a "migration regime" approach helps to understand the processes involved in negotiating border surveillance through diverse practices and actors (Pott et al., 2018). The term "regime" refers to the forms this field of power is policed by diverse actors of multi-scalar governance and nation-states (Tsianos and Karakayali, 2010; Betts, 2013). It is also used to acknowledge the increasing interdependence of different actors and the emergence of new actors, such as multinational corporations and NGOs (Tsianos and Karakayali, 2010, p. 3). Tsianos and Karakayali (2010) affirm that a regime is similar to "a virtual state for certain segments of internationally intertwined political and economic processes" (Tsianos and Karakayali, 2010, p. 3–4). In Mexico, the current migration regime is marked by immigration enforcement and securitization, which are not new phenomena and are based on an increasing process of the implementation of international and transnational agreements such as the "Merida Plan" (2008), the Southern Border Program (*Programa Frontera Sur,* 2014) (Torre Cantalapiedra and Yee-Quintero, 2018), and the Cooperation Agreement between the United States and Mexico from 2019 (Ruiz Soto, 2020). Furthermore, the US government has pushed the implementation of securitization policies in transit countries in Central America through the Central American Regional Security Initiative (Meyer and Ribando Seelke, 2015) and the Third Safe Country Agreements with Central American governments (Castro Soto, 2010; Chishti and Bolter, 2020). While some of these programs officially were aimed at combating drugs and crime, they all simultaneously contributed to the containment of migration and the militarization of migration routes.

Furthermore, securitization is accompanied by a proliferation of internal borders as a deterrence practice in territories of transit and of settlement in Mexico through a "governmentality of unease" (Bigo, 2002), similar to what has been documented in many parts of the world (Mountz et al., 2012; Biehl, 2015; Hyndman, 2019). In Mexico, the new push to enforce border controls within the Mexican territory has included the introduction of new control bodies such as the National Guard in 2019 and the involvement of civilian actors such as private bus companies in internal migration control practices, which have contributed to the intensification of human rights violations against migrants (REDODEM, 2019). At the same time, administrative rules that allowed certain mobility to some groups were replaced by new procedures that increasingly restricting the mobility of migrants and refugees within Mexico.[5] Although state policies have clearly favored the securitization of migration and contributed to the militarization of routes, increasing deportations and "permission by omission" of human rights violations have served as core deterrence strategies (Basok, 2019; Galemba et al., 2019). Between the years 2002 and 2017, Mexico deported 1.9 million people from three Central American countries, compared to the United States deporting 1.1 million

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5   That measures affected particularly people from Cuba or Haiti and African Countries which before the changes would receive an exit request ("oficio de salida") from the Immigration Office (INM), after the changes in 2019 this request was changes to a request to leave the country only through the Southern border (Gandini, 2020; Miranda, 2021). A measure that converted these groups in additional clients of smugglers in Mexico.

(Flores et al., 2019). This tendency has also led to a large number of people who are unable to reach the southern US border to claim asylum applying for refugee protection in Mexico. Refugee applications in Mexico have steadily increased since 2013 [Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB) and Comisión Mexicana de Ayuda a Refugiados (COMAR), 2017]. In 2021, Mexico had the third highest number of refugee applications in the world, with 132,700 in 2021 (UNHCR/ACNUR, 2021, p. 3). This is consistent with the trend that low-income countries in the Global South are hosting 83% of the world's refugee population, which accounts for 74.2 million forcibly displaced persons (UNHCR/ACNUR, 2021, p.2) and can be seen as a consequence of the shift in enforcement policies from the Global North to the Global South through securitization policies.

3 The embodied experience of migrants in border regimes

Traversing the North American migration corridor through Mexico is a bodily experience, as migrants face a difficult journey along clandestine routes which they undertake by foot or on freight trains, traversing rough territories which pose many risks and dangers without the necessary physical preparation and protection. They try to reach a safe space without the most basic secure access to food, water, a toilet, or appropriate shoes. Many mothers travel with their small children, caring all their belongings in a small backpack. As has been shown, transit is accompanied not only by the fear of suffering bodily harm and traumatizing forms of violence, but also by psychological stress and deprivation (Basok, 2019). The precarious conditions faced by undocumented migrants and refugees do not stop states and state agents from prosecuting and questioning their reasons for fleeing, nor do they prevent crime groups from preying on them. On the other hand, migrants have agency and engage in complex negotiations with actors on the ground. These processes themselves then "create opportunities to exercise agency" (Deshingkar, 2019, p. 2638).

Analyzing border policing and its effects on migrants' bodily experiences in the process of transit migration through Mexico requires mapping the actors who take part in the production of the social space. In the case of the North American migration corridor, this means acknowledging the "inconsistencies and ambiguities" (Fassin, 2011, p. 218) produced in the migration regime and by actors on the ground. Furthermore, internal bordering is produced by "everyday bordering", which brings the border into social relations, social institutions, and local life (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). Thus, bordering is conceptualized as practices that are located and constituted in the specificity of political negotiations, that shift and are "contested between individuals, groups and states as well as in the construction of individual subjectivities" (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018, p. 230). Mexican state and government officials contribute to enforcing migration control on the one hand, and the provision of humanitarian assistance on the other, but they are also involved in various activities related to the exploitation of benefits or the participation in crimes against migrants (Galemba et al., 2019). It is therefore imperative to analyze forms of violence exerted by different actors and how different forms of violence

impact the bordering practices observed. Among them, forms of "organized violence" are understood as "the use of force in a collective, organized way (…) perpetrated by constituencies like nation states as well as collective or corporate actors, legal and illegal, with varying levels of legitimacy" (Pries, 2019, p. 35). In the context of the Mexican "war on drugs" (since 2008), this means to analyze how structural and political violence against migrants has contributed to convert undocumented mobility into one of the main incomes of groups of organized crime (Durand, 2011) and local communities on transit routes.

For those who move as undocumented and "illegalized", the body becomes a central site of bordering. Thus, the body is a key concept to analyze the bodily experience in the context of forced migration processes. Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) distinguish between three different perspectives of the body as a heuristic concept for understanding social processes evolving around it in societies: (1) the phenomenological experience of the individual body understood as 'body-self', (2) the social body in a structuralist tradition, which looks at the representational and symbolic uses of the body, and (3) the 'body politic' in poststructuralist epistemology which refers to "the regulations, surveillance, and control of bodies" (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987, p. 8). In a structuralist tradition, Bourdieu (2007) has shown the relational logic of violence. Social hierarchies are also constructed by forms of symbolic violence exerted in gender relations and which construct social differences between people based on normalized forms of difference and othering (Bourdieu, 2007). The poststructuralist approach to the study of the body tells us "how certain kinds of bodies are socially produced" through "codes and social scripts" that contribute to the "domestication of the individual body according to the needs of the social and political order" (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987, p. 8, 26). To understand the subordination of the individual body in the "body politic", it is crucial to understand how violence, torture and subordination are interlinked with the economic processes of exploitation, especially in the context of postcolonial processes of exploitation (Foucault, 1995/1977; Walters, 2015). Incidents of torture, murder, and massacres against transit migrants on transit routes show many similarities to these extreme forms of violence described by Taussig (2004) as "cultures of terror" that display violence to maintain the established (post-)colonial order and to ensure economic hegemony. At the level of the body, violence then produces 'docile bodies' (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987) and ensures cheap and exploitable labor (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013).

In the context of Mexican transit routes, a complex system of interlinked actors participates in the economic exploitation of the need for mobility of migrants, who are mainly fleeing violence and the effects of economic deprivation in their countries of origin (Orozco and Yansura, 2014; Willers, 2016). Subordinated and racialized migrants' need for labor, housing and mobility then become a powerful driver for the local, national, and transnational economy. In the process of commodification of the bodies and existences (see Vogt, 2013), these acts of violence against migrants in transit then produce wealth as they bring the border to the bodies. Unequal power relations and exclusion are inscribed in the bodily experience of migrants and refugees in transit. This has been called a "border effect" in the lived experiences of migrants and refugees, as Idler has outlined in the case of Colombia

(Idler, 2019). The "gendered border effect" intensifies the logic of borders and "the logic of violent non-state group interactions" in form of a "*double impact*" of armed conflict and "refugee and migrant crisis" on women's bodies (Zulver and Idler, 2020, p. 1123). While systematic violence against migrants and refugees in transit throughout Mexico has been well documented [Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH), 2011; CIDH, 2013; REDODEM, 2019]; the rationale for (sexual) violence against women and men has not been sufficiently explained and must be understood in the broader context of patriarchy and violence against women. In this regard, Segato (2014) has shown how violence against women works as a form of "pedagogy of cruelty" by different groups and fractions who take part in new forms of war (Kaldor, 2014) and seek to establish dominance over a territory by exalting violence against gendered and feminized bodies of the opposite, or subordinated, group. Violence then becomes a tool of terror and control over a large group of people, who can then be exploited in many ways. In the context of the Mexican "war on drugs" (since 2008) and the militarization of migration routes, transnational criminal groups (Correa-Cabrera et al., 2015), control transit spaces by inflicting suffering, fear, and violence. This rationale is visible when we analyze the narrations of migrant women who have been crossing the transit routes through Mexico.

4 Methods

This article draws on data collected through ethnographic fieldwork for my Ph.D. thesis (2013/2014) (Willers, 2017) and postdoctoral research (2018/2019). During those years, I visited several urban centers along migration routes, including Tijuana and Mexicali, two border towns on the northern Mexican border with the United States, Tapachula in the South, and Mexico City in the center of the country. The research was based on a qualitative methodology following a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1996) and problem-centered interviews (Witzel, 2000) with migrants and refugees, as well as expert interviews with social workers at NGOs and institutions. Throughout those research periods, I interviewed 57 women and 6 men. Additionally, I interviewed 26 experts from various institutions who worked in fields related to the topic of migration in Mexico and had informal conversations with migrants and refugees, which were not recorded, but registered in the research diary and shorthand. The interviewees came mostly from four Central American countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The main goal of the inquiry was to register the gendered experiences of transit migration, social interactions in the field and survival strategies. Migrant women and families were approached in NGOs or migrant shelters that provided humanitarian aid to people in mobility. Interviewees received information and explanations about the goal and objective of the study and were asked to provide their informed consent for their interviews to be recorded and analyzed. All names have been changed to guarantee anonymity. In researching forced migration processes, I was aware of tensions, conflicts, and vulnerabilities that could arising from potential power hierarchies. I tried to counteract these tensions through open communication about my objectives, a respectful attitude toward the concerns and problems, and discretion in the content of our conversations. Also,

even if I did not research directly on the brokers on mobility at that time, their presence was also evident in the narratives of most of the people interviewed and thus the existence of an economy related to undocumented migration/mobility.

5 The bodily experience of transit: ethnographic evidence from the routes

Although the process of securitization of migration routes across Mexico is a long-standing phenomenon (Castro Soto, 2010), increasing border enforcement has also helped integrate internal borders into transit routes, thus changing the balance of power between the actors on the ground, increasing pressure of surveillance, and limiting choices of migrants. As transit conditions change, so do the experiences of transit and coping strategies of migrants on the routes. The analysis is structured as follows: I will show, first, how people interact with different actors who enable mobility along *securitized* migration routes and how migrant women and their families try to reduce the risk of gender-based violence along migratory routes, second, I will show how migrants who have repeatedly traveled have experienced the changes on routes over time and how this has affected mobility in recent years. Although I cannot go into detail about the impact of all border security measures, I will outline some general trends in their impact that can be observed in the narratives of migrants transiting Mexico.

Central American migrants and refugees move because of complex constellations of causes related to violence in their countries of origin that range from gender-based violence and intimate partner violence to overall social violence and persecution by organized crime groups (Orozco and Yansura, 2014; Stinchcomb and Hershberg, 2014; Willers, 2016). Those who are forced to flee due to threats mostly migrate without economic capital, and not all of them can count on reliable social contacts of family and friends in transnational networks. However, even people who travel without means try to adapt their strategies to the conditions they encounter on the road, which are often characterized by experiences of violence and the fear of suffering aggressions. Traditionally, "*coyotes*" or smugglers[6] have been hired as professional service providers who know the routes and can reduce potential harm and increase the success of the journey (Stone-Cadena and Álvarez Velasco, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018; Torre Cantalapiedra and Hernández Campos, 2021). But prices for guides, also called "*coyotes*" or "polleros", have been rising in the last decade and vary according to the country of origin and travel distance (Gonzalez-Guevara, 2018; Gandini, 2020).[7] Many people cannot afford to pay

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6 As "coyotes", "polleros" or smugglers I refer to people who provide guidance and logistical help to cross borders but also territories in exchange for material compensation in form of money or goods (see also Torre Cantalapiedra and Hernández Campos, 2021, p. 111). Yet, an analysis of women's experiences showed, they are sometimes also expected to pay with sexual "favors" (Ramos, 2017).

7 As noted by Gandini, and consistent with the Mexican Migration Project, *coyote* employment prices have increased from an average of $600 in the

for the whole trip from their home to the destination. Instead, they attempt to make the journey in smaller stages, trying to use guides only for certain segments considered more difficult than others (see also Gonzalez-Guevara 2018). This has changed hiring modes and entails a higher risk of connecting with 'false coyotes' or people who would try to cheat or lure their clients, as it is more difficult to know their reputation (Stone-Cadena and Álvarez Velasco, 2018; Torre Cantalapiedra and Hernández Campos, 2021). In addition, the emergence of large caravans of migrants in 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that social networks are playing an increasingly important role in accessing information (Gandini, 2020; OIM, 2023). However, it is unclear to what extend this will change the way people access intermediaries for mobility. For example, whether social media can provide the same quality of contacts to networks or replace traditional forms of smuggling. Ostensibly, they open the way for a depersonalization of smuggling services, but this risks an increase in amateur services by less experienced or even "false smugglers" (Stone-Cadena and Álvarez Velasco, 2018, p. 206). Although there have been significant changes in people's access to IT devices and access to information and communication technologies over the past decade, during the period of my fieldwork, most people still relied primarily on simple cell phones, rarely smartphones, and many cases of robbery were documented, as these items represented wealth that people were quickly deprived of.

The choice of transportation depends primarily on people's economic resources and their need to remain 'invisible'. Freight trains are the first choice for undocumented migrants without economic means who need to move and avoid checkpoints along major highways. However it is not a cheap way to move as it is known that people need to pay a fee to the groups who control the route. In 2013, I met Karen and her 3-year-old son in a shelter in Mexicali, where she waited to be "returned"—this meant deported by the Mexican migration authorities—to her home country, Guatemala. She decided to turn herself in after suffering gender-based violence by the son of a woman who gave her shelter. Previously, the smuggler who had brought her from the southern Mexican border had abandoned her at the U.S. border. He had decided to pass her brother first and had not returned to pick her up. In addition, her aunt had stopped sending money. Even though, she was sad about not having been able to cross the border; she was not willing to endure any more violence. Karen recounted her experience along the journey after she had left home with her brother and her little son and had crossed Mexico on the freight trains from the South to the North.

Yes, not all of them [migrants] come by train. Because most of them, if they have enough money to pay a good *coyote*, they don't come by train. Those of us who don't have a lot of money come by train. But the majority comes by train. You see everything on the train. You see all kinds of people and people from many countries. We met Cubans, Salvadorans, Hondurans, Nicaraguans, yes. And Guatemalans, we met quite a lot. Uh-huh. (...) I came with my brother and the one who brought us, the *coyote* [guide]. We caught him in Tecun Umán [Guatemalan border town], at the border, we caught him there (...) we paid him. He was paid there and here [at the US border] he had to be paid so that he could pass us upwards. In Guatemala he received 25 thousand quetzales... (...) So it was about 35 or 30 thousand pesos.[8] (…) and we paid it because the child was coming with us, so we said 'they are not going to hurt us'. But no. I think we are all exposed to that. They don't care about people, they care about money. How much is a person worth? Uh-huh. But I do think this is, it has been very difficult [sic] (Karen, Mexicali, 2013).

Having traveled more than 3,700 kilometers on the roof of a freight train, her experience was shaped by the precarious conditions of her journey. Knowing that Mexico is a difficult territory to cross and traveling with a small child, she hired a "*coyote*" right at the border between Guatemala and Mexico to be "safer". Paying a guide not only meant escaping state control, but also potential attacks by criminal groups and gangs, reducing potential harm and assuring physical integrity. Women and children are believed to be at disproportionate risk of being targeted by criminals and becoming victims of violence, including sexual violence, rape, kidnapping, and extortion by various groups. On these routes, a plurality of actors gets on the train, including local crime groups and state actors involved in raids. Obeying the market principles of "the higher the risk, the higher the price", smugglers then charge higher amounts for women and children, although, as the interviewee explained afterwards, this is not a guarantee for protection. By saying "we are all exposed", she also indicated that even smugglers as facilitators were exposed. As she explained later, they must pay a fee to the groups that control transit routes and trains, or they risk being punished through violence, including sexual violence, against themselves or their clients, which then affects their reputation and their smuggling business. She expressed her disbelief at the unbearable logic of indifference toward the value of people's lives prevalent in train interactions: "They don't care about people; they care about money. How much is a person worth?", acknowledging that even though

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people pay smugglers in the hopes of being safer, there is little security possible. Regarding the ability to provide protection, Karen narrated the following incident:

I: And the coyote didn't take care of you?

K: Yes, he did; the thing is that on the train, we are exposed to many things. Kidnappers get on,... So he can't do much, just say, "Don't take her. Or don't do that to her." But that's all.

> With a gun, you can't move. With a gun, you keep quiet and say: "Ok." Uh-huh. In one train, a young man got on, covered his face, and everything. You could only see his eyes, his nose and his mouth, and he asked me who I was traveling with. And the men were silent. And I thought "They're going to put me down." (…) And he wanted me to get off. He wanted me to go to where he was. So, I told him that I had a sore foot. And he told me: "Wait here! Wait!" But since it was nighttime, he left. When he came back, I wasn't there anymore. I was hiding in that hole in the train. And the boys said: "No, there is no woman!" [sic] (Karen, Mexicali, 2013).

Not only are people mostly charged high amounts of money, as Karen, but still women risk their lives and bodily integrity in this trajectory. Her narration also showed how women have become a particular target in the logic of commodification of migration routes. But sometimes also a bail to put pressure on the group of migrants. As she explained: *"The men were scared out of their wits. They were all very scared. Because when they were going to put me down, they weren't going to let them put me down. So, as he was armed… But thank God no! (…)"* (Karen, Mexicali, 2013). The men traveling with her were also scared because they felt responsible to protect her. Thus, the border is experienced by women through their bodies and puts them at risk of becoming targets of the various actors involved in controlling transit routes. These include not only organized crime groups but also government officials, other migrants, and migration brokers who exploit the subordination of migrants and refugees through border control. These structural, political, and cultural conditions of transit in the context of increased immigration enforcement turn into a kind of "unspoken rule" (Bourdieu, 1997) on migration routes that undocumented mobility entails high risk and little protection. Migrant women need to negotiate their safety and try to adapt their strategies for transit. In the undocumented migrant community, there is solidarity and mutual help, but there is also competition, fear, and betrayal. In the social field of undocumented migration, ambivalence prevails in relationships between people, where one and the same person can potentially take on different roles, being helpful and showing solidarity for some, but taking advantage of the situation for others. This also affects the relationships between migrant men and women on the routes. In patriarchal logic, women find "help" by traveling with men who are supposed to "protect" them from harassment by other men. However, the women interviewed recounted that they would avoid traveling with men and asking for their protection because they felt obliged to "pay" the favor of supposed protection with sex'. An interviewee asked if traveling with men would provide her with protection and answered: *"No, no, no. Because today men are no longer the same. The longer time passes, the uglyer they get, the rougher they get. If they do you a favor, they want to charge you for it, and so on. They start extorting and bothering you, so they don't."* (Maria, Tapachula, 2013). This also means that women who travel alone are trapped in gender, structural, and political violence, and in a patriarchal logic that limits their mobility and expects them to "pay" a different price for mobility and "protection".

Regarding the changes in securitization and the balance of power between actors of the migration industry on transit routes and borders in recent years, Andrea, a 54-year-old migrant from El Salvador, shared how she experienced these changes. She traveled these routes several times from South to North with her husband. She first arrived in the United States in 1986 but was deported in 2004 and forced to go through Mexico several times without being able to cross the U.S. border again. She remembered the changes in Laredo, Texas, when "Los Zetas", a notorious drug cartel known for its use of extreme violence, took control of the northern Mexican border.

> The "Grandfather" was the boss of the "*polleros*" and they killed him, and after they killed him we left because it got ugly, because of those who were there on the river. Because when I first arrived in Laredo there was no "Los Zeta" guarding the river and collecting fees, in other words, you could pass through and there was no problem…. (…) Well, it was around 2000, and then when we went back to try to cross there by the river, by the *Rio Bravo* in Laredo, no longer, there were already a lot of "Zetas" there, you had to pay them a fee. No, I said, I better go back. By that time, they had already killed "the grandfather" [sic] (Andrea, Tijuana 2013).

As interviewees reported, government control and the increasing control of organized crime groups on transit routes often go hand in hand. Also experienced migrants who know the routes, as they have already traveled them several times, are affected by the changed conditions and the prevailing logic of violence in the transit zones. Rapidly changing border enforcement and securitization measures are also affecting the diverse mobility resources of migrant communities, as they make access to information more difficult. Reliable information is mostly provided by social networks and is an important prerequisite for safer transit; yet, with the increasing speed of changes in border enforcement, this is becoming a scarce resource. In addition, migrants and refugees have different access to confidential networks. People who can plan their migration in advance could potentially seek out and rely on more trustworthy smugglers than those who were forced to leave quickly without the ability to prepare. Smuggling services with a reliable reputation are usually contacted from countries of origin and destination. But people without many resources and strong networks rely on *coyotes* they find along migration routes, or in migrant shelters by the recommendation of other migrants. However, it poses the risk of trusting people who turn out to be scammers (*estafadores*). Eduardo, a seasoned El Salvadoran migrant interviewed in southern Mexico, traveled accompanied by his two nieces. Eduardo felt responsible for their safety. After having been told by others that they were an easy target for rape and assault, he felt afraid to travel the clandestine routes with both women. He was scared and thought that a guide would help him solve the problem. Finally, he trusted a couple who would serve as guides to cross immigration checkpoints, but the group was stopped anyway. After their detention by the Mexican Migration Institute (INM), the same couple then tried to extort money from their family in El Salvador, saying they would have to post bail to be released, while he and one nice were deported. Their experience showed how the threat of sexual violence is a powerful barrier to the mobility of women that also opens the way to further forms of extortion. These stories of betrayal are an everyday occurrence on migration routes, and people receive constant advice at migrant shelters or NGOs not to trust people who offer to help as smugglers

or "coyotes". However, it is essential to gather information from others to proceed, even if they are mostly strangers. Cities and communities with migrant shelters are therefore "spaces of possibilities and spheres of orientation" (Vigh, 2007) as important places of recreation and information sharing, where people meet or wait for their *coyotes* or *polleros*, often recommended by their families. The humanitarian infrastructure and migrant shelters are unmissable, necessary places for migrants to make their way through the ever-changing and complex conditions of transit. The exchange of information between migrants in local spaces is an important mechanism to guide the movement of people and mitigate the impact of uncertainty. This has been discussed by Parrini and Flores (2018) as a form of resistance and a strategy of "collective production of coordinates for orientation" through the construction of oral maps, which help migrants navigate their way. While smuggling services in the best cases connect places of origin and destinations, under current conditions the transit has become an incalculable risk for migrants even for those who can pay a facilitator.

In current circumstances, the struggle for survival is not just a metaphor, but a lived reality for people trying to escape extreme violence and poverty. In Mexico, undocumented migrants have to pay for everything, even things that are allegedly free, such as boarding freight trains, asking for alms in public space, or even participating in the survival economy by selling sex (Álvarez Velasco, 2011; Stinchcomb and Hershberg, 2014; see Muñoz Martínez et al., 2020).[9] The violence perpetrated against transit migrants, especially women, is normalized in the form of symbolic violence on the level of everyday interactions and public discourses, which mostly see women as victims and underestimate their agency, as well as their need to migrate in order to survive and to maintain their families. At the same time, it renders invisible the political, economic, and cultural structures which enforce the gendered logic of women's subordination. Furthermore, public policies ignore victims' rights to safety and protection and contribute to revictimization, which is one of the reasons many women who have suffered violence do not report these acts to authorities (Willers, 2019a,b). As the analysis showed, the body is the vehicle through which the migrant journey is experienced, as well as a major tool for agency. Therefore, border enforcement has contributed to the construction of migrant bodies through a 'body politic' (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987) that turns their bodies to objects exploitable by others and by charging money for their bodily integrity. This situations leads to gendered inequalities of mobility and to an increasing need to draw on "reverse" remittances (Mazzucato, 2011) from families in home countries for migrants to access migration services provided by actors in the "migration industries" to make their way to the US. On the other side border enforcement has weakened the possibilities of migrants to negotiate their bodily integrity and the conditions of transit with actors that facilitate or control mobility by contributing to power- imbalances on routes of transit.

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9   As scholars have shown, in Tapachula, sex workers must pay a 100-peso "tax," an amount far exceeding the daily minimum wage, which was set at 66 pesos (approximately 4.08US$) in 2015 (CONASAMI, 2022), to the controlling criminal group for every working day (Muñoz Martínez et al., 2020, p. 8).

6 Discussion

In this paper, my aim was to explore the ways in which border enforcement has contributed to shaping the bodily experiences of transit in the experiences of migrant women. In particular, I was interested in how women experience internal bordering and how it shapes the power hierarchies of actors in the field of mobility. The analysis showed that border enforcement has had concrete effects on how migrants negotiate their safety and bodily integrity in the context of undocumented mobility, and that bordering is experienced through violence and terror on migration routes. The findings display three aspects relevant to the study of bodily experiences of migration in transit. First, the current transit conditions faced by undocumented migrants impact their interactions with actors in the field of mobility when negotiating the terms of mobility and safety. In view of the high dynamics of changing actors and an increasing militarization of transit routes, mobility itself and the negotiation of its conditions have become more difficult. Changing actors and new bodies of migration control, such as state agents of newly created corporations, or private security of bus and train companies, contribute to modifying power dynamics in the field. Therefore, the militarization of transit routes driven not only by the state but also by other groups of "organized violence" (Pries, 2019) has contributed to (re)shaped practices of "migration industries" and their actors and deepened the complexities of negotiating between clients and brokers. The ambivalent positioning of migrants, in hierarchical relationships toward the state, state actors, and actors of undocumented mobility during transit, has been analyzed by Coutin (2005, p. 196). She has shown how immigration enforcement contributes to positioning migrants in a "liminal political-legal space" of mobility where they are "simultaneously in and out of space" (Coutin, 2005, p. 196) and therefore extremely vulnerable to violence and exploitation. This is also the case under conditions of heightened border enforcement in Mexico (Galemba et al., 2019). Second, the ability of undocumented migrants to negotiate their transit with the help of smugglers or *coyotes,* which are hired by migrants to reduce risks, is weakened, as there is a plurality of actors who engage in policing and controlling the territory through violence and the infliction of fear. Thus, it appears that the old rules of exchange and reliability become blurred and insecure through increasing internal bordering. The relationships between smugglers and their clients, which have been described as a form of "security from below" based on "reciprocity", solidarity and trust, and social reputation (Sanchez and Zhang, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018) have become more ambiguous, as prices have been rising and new forms of smuggling practices have emerged. Research has shown that anti-immigration measures and enforcement policies have contributed to the changing power relations of the actors in the field of undocumented migration (Stone-Cadena and Álvarez Velasco, 2018; Badillo and Bravo, 2020). This also relates to the desperation of many migrants confronted with new immigration enforcement measures, who are unfamiliar with the routes and conditions and who do not count on reliable social networks and economic resources to engage in more professional smuggling services. Third, the analysis showed how women have become a particular target in the control of undocumented migrants' mobility and their being forced to pay arbitrarily imposed fees

in exchange for their bodily integrity. Migrants, including their smugglers, not only have to pay for clandestine border crossings, but throughout the entire transit. Although smugglers are supposed to pass these costs to their clients, migrants must pay higher prices. Women's bodies then become a privileged site of border demarcation through the threat of sexual violence and the symbolic expropriation of their bodies as "spoils of war" by different groups competing for dominance over territory. A violence that serves to discipline the collective of undocumented migrants and families and to manifest the patriarchal power of those groups (Segato, 2014). It is also important to recognize the psychological and social impact of sexual violence on women and their families, given the stigma faced by victims in communities of origin and destination (Girardi, 2008; Ramos, 2017). Finally, border and immigration measures implemented in Mexico have not only contributed to increasing the risks and costs of clandestine travel, but, along with deportations from Mexico, also to processes of impoverishment of families and communities through increasing debt and mistrust between migrants (Nyberg S1ørensen, 2013; Ramos, 2017).

Internal bordering has become an integral part of immigration enforcement throughout Mexico, for example, through the incorporation of civil actors of transport companies into the bordering practices or through implementing deterrence measures such as deportation or protracted administrative procedures through delays in refugee admissions or immigration regularization (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan, 2017). Furthermore, these policies contribute to placing people in a hierarchical set of relations (Anthias, 2013, p. 155) which provides space for human rights violations and xenophobia. There is a tendency toward bringing the border into the national territory by retaining migrants in the South, where conditions are particularly dire due to the construction of Central Americans as racialized others (Frank-Vitale and Núñez-Chaim, 2020), and through re-bordering and '(social) ordering practices' (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). Nevertheless, a look at the embodied experiences of migrant women shows that, even though their journeys are marked by precarity and vulnerability, that there is also "resilience and resourcefulness" (Ehrkamp, 2016, p. 2). Scholars have also stressed the importance of understanding the agency in the negotiation of mobility smuggling services (Sanchez and Zhang, 2018; Stone-Cadena and Álvarez Velasco, 2018; Deshingkar, 2019). However, critical migration scholars coincide in stressing that bordering practices translate into everyday violence, which curtails the options of refugees and migrants to choose mobility, access work, or simply confront physical and sexual violence (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). Violent bordering is productive as it creates 'disposable' bodies for exploitation and cheap labor (Anthias, 2013; Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). As Vogt has observed, the commodification of migrant bodies in local economies produces "cargo to smuggle, gendered bodies to sell, labor to exploit, organs to traffic and lives to exchange for cash" (Vogt, 2013, p. 765). Thus, there is a need to open our understanding to the multiple roles that actors can play in the field of power and in this economy of dispossession that draws not only on the need for mobility, but also on violence and fear (Fassin, 2011 in its

reflection on coloniality and economy, also Muñoz Martínez et al., 2020).

Since 2018, the United States administration has been looking to incorporate Central American transit countries, such as Guatemala and Honduras, into the securitization and enforcement agendas by implementing safe third-country agreements (Gzesh, 2019). Additionally, during the pandemic, there has been a further push to enforce control measures, such as Title 42 in the United States, the temporary suspension and re-instauration of Migrant Protection Protocols (MPPs) and temporary border closures between countries (Alvarez Velasco, 2021). Moreover, there is a generally high level of discretion in the implementation of different protocols by Mexican and US authorities on undocumented migrants and refugees (Chishti and Bolter, 2020; Ruiz Soto, 2022). If we are to fully understand the dynamics in Mexico, a further look at the policing of migration in Central American countries becomes more relevant to understand the interplay of violence and border enforcement on migrants in transit. Thus, the impact of ongoing securitization on the relationships between different actors in the field, at the local level and in countries of origin, transit, and desired destination remains an important element for further inquiry.

7 Conclusions

As the analysis showed, border enforcement at the policy level has an impact on the relationships between people in the field of mobility. Looking at the ways in which migrants' bodily experiences are affected by the policing of these borders is timely, as there is a constant push toward building barriers and walls which prevent people from crossing at various points of migration routes. Violent bordering, or bordering through violence, is productive in many ways, as it weakens the ability of illegalized migrants to negotiate mobility and bodily integrity and fuels local economies which benefit from the commodification of migrants' lives. It also drives an economy of fear and violence which clearly takes advantage of gendered bordering, turning transit territories into territories without rights. Thus, the title citation from our interviewee "They don't care about people; they care about money. How much is a person worth?" speaks of the precarity of transit for people who are left without rights on the sites of internal bordering. It illustrates the fact that the "illegalization" of migrants (including refugees) is a powerful driver for local, national and transnational economies. Yet, these dynamics not only have an impact on individuals, but come with a social cost for societies that are strongly interconnected through transnational ties. In addition, the findings contribute to our understanding of the complexities of border enforcement on the ground and its impact on the social lines of inequality of local and transnational communities, as it changes the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1997) and contributes to the commodification of mobility.

Data availability statement

Ethics statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because of privacy and ethical restrictions. Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Exclusion by design: The undocumented 1.5 generation in the U.S

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This article focuses on Mexican individuals who grew up in the U.S. (1.5 generation) without documents and were not able to benefit from Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or who were unable to renew their DACA. A 2012 Executive Action by former president Obama, DACA gave some undocumented youth relief from deportation and a 2-year renewable work permit provided they met certain criteria. Undocumented individuals DACA failed to reach have generally been overlooked in immigration research in favor of examining how DACA recipients' lives have been transformed by DACA. This project helps fill this gap by examining life outside of DACA, and how the program acted as an internal U.S. border of exclusion for many. This research also aids in understanding the impacts of changing government policies on vulnerable populations, especially those who are in some respects made even more vulnerable by their faith in the government, fear of the government, or are actively excluded from government programs. This investigation is part of a study that compares 20 DACA beneficiaries to 20 individuals without DACA. Through ethnographic methodologies and one-on-one interviews, this article examines the 20 research participants who fall outside DACA. It investigates why people who qualified for DACA did not apply, barriers to applying/renewing, and how members of the 1.5 generation were excluded from the program by restrictions such as date of arrival requirements. The article discusses what it means for research participants to live outside of DACA, and how they see their lives because they do not have DACA while others do. For example, what does it mean to age out of qualifying for DACA? What actions did individuals then take regarding their lack of legal status?

KEYWORDS

DACA, 1.5 generation, undocumented immigration, liminal legality, undocumented youth, immigration policy

I recently got my wisdom teeth taken out, and then they [the pharmacist] asked me for an ID for the pain medication prescription. I had to tell the pharmacist that I don't have an ID. You know, it sucks because I don't even have an ID. This is the same reason why I can't go anywhere with my friends since so many places are 21 and over. Oh, I don't even tell my friends about my situation. You know, I only tell my very close friends, but I don't tell everyone my situation. I can't be like, "oh, no, I can't go out with you because I don't have an ID, I don't even have a birth certificate." The times that I have told some of my friends, they don't believe me. They think that I'm joking around, and I'm just like, dude, I really don't have any ID. You guys don't understand my situation because you guys are citizens here or have DACA. I don't have any of that. It just sucks.

-Julie (Interview #40)

Introduction

Julie was born in Mexico, and her parents brought her to the United States when she was only 3 years old. Although Julie is now 22 years old and grew up in the U.S. (Orange County, California), she is undocumented. Individuals who, like Julie, were born in a different country but raised in the U.S. are known as the 1.5 generation (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 2004). In 2012 the executive action of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) gave some undocumented youth a 2-year renewable work permit (these individuals are often referred to as Dreamers), but many were excluded through requirements like age cut-offs. Julie tried to apply to the DACA program but was unable to because she does not have a birth certificate or any type of government identification (more on her story later). I argue that DACA's strict requirements and qualification criteria such as those faced by Julie act as an internal border excluding many in the 1.5 generation from incorporation and participation into U.S. society.

National borders are traditionally defined through physical spaces as in the edge or boundary separating one country from its geographic neighbor like in the U.S.-Canada border crossing. These spaces are often the sites of extreme violence as evidenced by the more than 2,600 bodies found since 2000 in the U.S.-Mexico border state of Arizona alone (De Leon, 2015). In the last few decades however, the U.S. has brought its national borders from the boundaries of its physical peripheries to the interior of the country by enforcing programs that impact everyday life like the Secure Communities initiative, local police agreements with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and setting up DUI checkpoints, immigration checkpoints, and home and work raids (Menjívar, 2014; Gonzales and Raphael, 2017). These have resulted in countless arrests, detentions, and deportations, leaving immigrant communities fearful, left out of essential resources needed for survival, and feeling like outsiders in their own neighborhoods (De Genova, 2002). As Mezzadra and Neilson (2012) demonstrate, the proliferation of internal borders "are no less violent or discriminating than more traditional forms of bordering" (2012, p. 70).

This article explores the reasons why certain undocumented Mexican individuals of the 1.5 generation living in Southern California chose not to apply or could not apply for DACA. Most research on the undocumented 1.5 generation centers on individuals who received DACA, and how their lives have been positively transformed by the program. Little is known about the individuals DACA failed to reach, barriers faced when applying to the program, and the negative consequences of DACA such as forced name alteration (Sanchez, 2018, Forthcoming). This article helps fill this gap by focusing an anthropological lens on the day-to-day lives of research participants and examining how immigration law, policy, and programs impact lived experiences. It adds to studies of scholars like Vilchis Díaz (2021) on Dreamer subjectivities and how DACA in some ways reinforced exclusion of undocumented migrants (Perez Huber, 2015; Aranda et al., 2020; Menjívar, 2023). Furthermore, I conceptualize internal borders not as unintended consequences of immigration law, but as carefully crafted by the nation state in order to exclude through things like arbitrary requirements embedded in policy.

This paper focuses on 20 Mexican individuals who were left out of the DACA program and their daily lives through an anthropological lens and ethnographic methodologies. The main concept outlining the theoretical framework of this article is everyday bordering as posited by Yuval-Davis et al. (2018) to encompass the shift in recent immigration enforcement from the outer territorial border to the interior of a country. Internal bordering is caried out through mechanisms such as restrictive legislation, internal immigration checkpoints, and even through the expectation that ordinary citizens have a duty to become informal border-guards by overseeing documents at schools and jobs, as well as reporting suspected undocumented immigrants.

The second concept outlining the theoretical framework of this article is legal violence, which is defined as the "instances in which laws and their implementation give rise to practices that harm individuals physically, economically, psychologically, or emotionally" (Menjívar and Abrego, 2012, p. 11). Legal violence occurs when laws that are supposed to protect rights simultaneously enable marginalization and ill treatment of certain groups. Legal violence often manifests itself as a kind of political violence that operates through neglect. Important to the concept of legal violence is abject status, a term utilized to describe the "casting away of individuals and populations" as if they were disposable objects, which "shapes (or perhaps delimits) their social, economic, and biological life" (Gonzales and Chavez, 2012, p. 256). The abject designates those who have been rendered "other" in society through intersectionalities of race, gender, nationality, legal status, and many other categories (Butler, 1999; Chavez, 2008; De Genova, 2008).

As evident by Julie's testimony at the beginning of this article, quotidian life can be a real struggle when one is undocumented. By excluding Julie and others like her, the requirements act as an internal border preventing Julie from full participation in the society she grew up in. Things that most people would consider mundane occurrences like picking up prescription medications or going out with friends to places that are 21-and-over are completely off limits for Julie. She describes her situation as a constant feeling of being stuck. Other research participants shared that they do not travel outside county limits for fear of immigration checkpoints or that they are forced to miss out on internships or better paying jobs despite having all required qualifications due to their lack of legal status.

This paper sheds light on the impacts of changing government policies on vulnerable populations, especially those who are in some respects made even more vulnerable by actively being excluded from government programs. DACA is a good example of changing immigration government policy, and its volatility stems in part from the fact that it is not a law but an executive action, which leaves it open to being rescinded. This became a reality when the Trump administration rescinded DACA in September 2017 (Romo et al., 2017), thereby unleashing several battles in district and federal courts and politicizing the plight of the undocumented 1.5 generation even more (American Immigration Council, 2021). As it stands now, the U.S. government is not accepting any first-time applications. Only those who already have DACA may renew their work permits. This prevents many who qualify from benefiting from the program. Such restrictions paired with the

insecurity of the ever-changing nature of the program, strict program requirements, an expensive application fee, and fear of government keeps people who grew up in the U.S. on the outside of society.

Through ethnographic methodologies including in-depth interviews of day-to-day struggles due to lack of legal status, I demonstrate how the undocumented 1.5 generation is contained as bodies at the border since they are actively excluded from full U.S. societal incorporation, and are, as Coutin puts it, "physically present but legally absent" (Coutin, 2007, p. 9). To demonstrate this, I begin by providing the methods utilized in this article. This is followed by a section outlining all the requirements one must meet in order to qualify for DACA, and how these acted as an internal border leaving many in the undocumented 1.5 generation without protection. Next, I give a brief overview of DACA's history and recent legal battles, followed by the demographics of DACA beneficiaries. After, I analyze the group of individuals who qualified but did not apply, which includes Julie's story. The second group I focus on are those who grew up in the United States, but do not qualify for DACA. The third group is made up of those who at one point had DACA, but for various reasons were unable to renew DACA and now fall outside of the program's protection. The fourth and last group I examine are research participants who applied to DACA but were denied. I end by making final observations and offering closing thoughts in the "Discussion and Conclusion" section.

Methods

The data utilized in this article is part of a doctoral dissertation study in anthropology at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) made up of 40 interviews that compares individuals with DACA to those without. Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in San Diego County and Orange County from September 2017 to April 2021 through confidential one-on-one interviews and participant observation. The majority of interviews were conducted from December of 2019 to March of 2021. This area in Southern California is home to one of the largest populations of DACA eligible individuals in the country (∼60,000 people) (Cantor, 2015).

The University of California Irvine's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved the research methods. In order to protect research participants and to ensure confidentiality, each participant was given a pseudonym. No identifiers were collected during the interviews, and each interviewee is given a code number (e.g., interview 1). In addition, signed consent has been waived in favor for verbal consent by the IRB to further protect research participants by keeping their identity anonymous. Interviews, with consent, were recorded on digital recorders, and here too, no identifiers are recorded, merely "interview 1," etc.

Most research participants for this study were recruited from a DREAMER resource center where I volunteered (helping with things such as tutoring, creating flyers for services offered, helping put on events, and more). Research participants would tell their friends and family about my study thereby recruiting additional research participants through word-of-mouth. Research

participants were interviewed utilizing semi-structured open-ended questions. Interviews, ranging in duration from 45 min to 2 ½ h, were recorded on digital recorders and transcribed. Narrative data analysis included coding the transcribed interviews and searching for thematic categories using MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis computer program. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the research moved to a virtual platform as well as phone interviews.

The age range for this study's participants was 18 to 52 years old, but most participants (28 individuals) were between the ages 18–26. They broke down by gender as following, 26 research participants were female and 14 were male. For the ones without DACA protection, 13 were female and 7 were male. The same was true for those with DACA protection, 13 participants were female and 7 were male. According to recipient statistics in the U.S., there are slightly more females with DACA, which is reflected in the participant demographics of this study. Figures by USA Facts (2020) demonstrate that 53 percent of DACA recipients are female and 47% are male. The current average age of Dreamers is 28 with a large amount of individuals (203,890) between the ages of 21–25, followed by the age group of 26–30 years old (191,580) (American Immigration Council, 2021).

DACA restrictions as internal borders and DACA beneficiaries

Border enforcement manifests insidiously through strict requirements embedded in immigration programs. DACA consideration is only given to immigrants who meet the rigid age restrictions of having arrived in the U.S. before their 16th birthday and who were under 31 years of age when the program was announced on June 15, 2012. Eligibility also requires that applicants must have continuously resided in the U.S. since June 15, 2007 up to the present time, and must have had no lawful status on June 15, 2012. Additionally, there is an education and/or military service requisite that demands applicants be currently enrolled in school (or have returned to school), graduated from high school, obtained certificate of completion (e.g., GED), or be an honorably discharged U.S. veteran (Coast Guard or Armed Forces). Finally, to be considered for DACA, one must have not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor offense, multiple misdemeanor offenses, or otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

Yuval-Davis et al. argue that the ever-increasing restrictions on qualification requirements for immigration programs is just one of many ways that wealthy countries (like the U.S., Britain, and Canada) displace borders and border controls relocating these to the inside of the country in a process they call "de- and re-bordering" (2018). These controls are essentially being carried out by anything, anyone, and anywhere–government agencies, private companies, document overseers, individual citizens, educational institutions, as well as court decisions, and mounting application and renewal fees (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). These displaced borders seep into the daily life of immigrants in what Yuval-Davis et al. term "everyday bordering" since immigrants are blocked or are

restricted from access to essential resources necessary for carrying out day-to-day life.

The strict harshness of DACA's qualification requirements is evident when the program is compared to past immigration programs like the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) that did not have maximum age restrictions banning individuals from applying to amnesty. Furthermore, the education and/or military service requisite for DACA has no legal precedent in U.S. immigration law (Strauss, 2019; Zong and Batalova, 2019), and unfairly demands of the undocumented 1.5 generation something never before expected of any other immigrant group in U.S. history. Although some academics argue that strict criteria appeases anti-immigrant groups generally (Ngai, 2004; Olivas, 2020; Horton, 2020), the education requirement is notably stringent since high school graduation rates for undocumented youth are statistically low. Among undocumented people between the ages of 18–24, 40 percent have less than a high school education compared to 8 percent for those born in the U.S. (Passel and Cohn, 2009).

The strict requirements that prevent people from qualifying to DACA are not limited to the program. In fact, immigration opportunities are often limited in these ways. Anti-immigration pundits see it as the classical "floodgates" problem—in order to prevent opening the "floodgates" to many applicants, immigration programs are riddled with deadlines, age limits, minimum education qualifications, and a flurry of other ever-increasing criteria (Menjívar, 2014). Immigration programs and policy in the U.S. are becoming more restrictive and reducing or closing off pathways to legal residency and citizenship. However, this is not unique to the U.S. since there is a worldwide trend toward limited immigration. For instance, many countries in the global north such as Canada and England have been shifting to programs that only offer the type of liminal legality that DACA gives in something Canadian scholar, Smith, terms "global regimes of closure" (Smith, 2022). This leaves immigrants in precarious conditions since beneficiaries are not truly moved out of undocumentedness. Instead, immigrants are given temporary work permits that must be conditionally renewed and do not provide "legal status" or a pathway to citizenship.

It is estimated that ∼1.2 million individuals in the U.S. out of a total undocumented population of 11 million were eligible for the conditionally renewed work permits that DACA offers (Vinopal, 2019). However, only 611,270 out of the 1.2 million were enrolled in the program at the end of March 2022 (National Public Radio, 2022). While there has not been much research on those who qualified but did not apply, it is hypothesized that many did not attempt to become DACA beneficiaries due to the high costs associated with the application, renewal, and lawyer fees (Gonzales et al., 2014). These claims are supported by the data collected from this study. Despite DACA recipients being <1 percent of the total U.S. population, they pay 4 billion in taxes in every year, which is approximately a tenth of what the entire U.S. immigrant population contributes (Vinopal, 2019). The majority of DACA eligible, or 93 percent, are working or in school, and altogether DACA beneficiaries earned more than 23.4 billion dollars in 2017 (Vinopal, 2019).

National studies demonstrate that 69 percent of DACA beneficiaries saw their wages increase in part due to acquiring new employment that better fit their education, training, and career goals (Wong et al., 2017). Furthermore, 56 percent moved to a job with better working conditions. These numbers are in line with the experiences of this study's participants who have DACA as the majority saw an increase in their earnings and improved working conditions. Although DACA meant that beneficiaries had access to better paying jobs by being able to work legally and were able to contribute financially to their families and households (Gonzales et al., 2014; Wong and Valdivia, 2014; Teranishi et al., 2015), recipients continued expressing fear for their loved ones being detained and deported (Teranishi et al., 2015; Abrego, 2018). Although DACA allowed them to feel a sense of protection, they still stressed about the wellbeing of their undocumented relatives. Beyond figures of how beneficial DACA is and continues to be to those who have it or how much they contribute to the U.S. economy, this study examines the ways the 1.5 generation continue to be excluded.

DACA's limitations, brief history, and recent legal developments

Despite DACA opening access to things such as social security cards, legal employment, and higher education, the program continues to impose limitations both formally and informally. Formally, DACA recipients are not able to travel in and out of the country. DACA individuals can acquire advance parole, a permit allowing travel outside the county under certain circumstances, but it is expensive, difficult to obtain, and does not guarantee being accepted back into country. Additionally, DACA recipients are barred from various jobs, especially government jobs, which are reserved for U.S. citizens and permanent legal residents. Informally, individuals with DACA are turned down from employment they legally qualify for. For example, a research participant in this study, Sara, obtained a job with T-Mobile, but they laid her off as soon as they learned she had DACA. The management at T-Mobile claims they did not want to risk hiring Sara because there is no guarantee that DACA will continue.

The reason the DACA program is at risk of not continuing is because it is an executive action and not a law. Former President Barack Obama instituted the DACA program through executive action in June of 2012 after the failure of the U.S. government to pass legal reform that would help undocumented individuals who were brought to the U.S. at a young age (Abrego, 2018). The DREAM Act was the legal reform that would have granted a pathway to citizenship for those in the undocumented 1.5 generation. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the DREAM Act in December of 2010, but the bill failed to pass in the senate (Olivas, 2020). DACA's intention was to provide those who would have qualified for the DREAM Act with some form of immigration relief. Because the program is not a law, those with DACA gained an in-between status, not fully legal since they do not have a pathway to citizenship, but not fully undocumented either, given that DACA provides some protections from deportation.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Trump's administration rescindment of DACA in June of 2017 ushered in a tumultuous period for DACA as legal battles at both the district and federal level were started. At times the courts have sided with the DACA

program and at times have sided against the program. For instance, in June of 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Trump administration's rescindment of DACA was unlawful. However, more recently, in July of 2021, a U.S. District Court in Texas ruled the program as illegal on the grounds that it violates the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), a law regulating how federal agencies develop and issue policies (Department of Homeland Security, 2021). At the time of this writing, the latest court ruling on DACA came on October 5th, 2022, by the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals issuing a decision stating that DACA could remain in place for now, but that no new applications would be accepted leaving hundreds of thousands who qualify without the opportunity to gain protection from the program (National Public Radio, 2022).

There is a possibility that DACA will once again go to the Supreme Court, and this has many of its supporters worried since the current U.S. Supreme Court is conservative leaning and unlikely to uphold DACA. NPR reports that data on Supreme Court rulings proves that the present Court is the most conservative in 90 years (Totenberg, 2022). For instance, the judges came to more conservative decisions in the 2022 terms than ever seen since 1931 (Totenberg, 2022). Although the future of DACA is uncertain in the current U.S. political climate, the Biden presidential administration released a memorandum reaffirming the federal government's continued support of the program stating that "the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Attorney General, shall take all actions he deems appropriate, consistent with applicable law, to preserve and fortify DACA" (American Immigration Council, 2021).

Qualified but did not apply

Julie, the research participant in the introduction, is one of 7 research participants in this study who qualified for DACA but could not apply. Like many other research participants who qualified but were unable to submit an application, she was missing one important required document. In her case, she was missing a birth certificate, but other participants found it difficult to prove through paperwork things like continual residence since 2007. Other research participants who qualified but did not apply said they lacked the financial resources. Individuals in this group often had more than one reason for not being able to apply. For example, they might not have had the money for their initial application and were missing required documents. It costs 495 dollars to apply to DACA plus about another 500 dollars for lawyer fees. The renewal fee one must pay every 2 years is also 495 dollars.

Julie's case is testament to the multitude of barriers individuals face trying to get DACA. In her interview, she states that her family did not have enough money for the initial application, and she does not have any form of government of identification because she does not have a birth certificate. Since Julie was born in a remote area of Mexico, and her family was not able to travel to the nearest city, a birth certificate was never issued for her. Additionally, Julie did not graduate high school because she became a teen mom at 16 years of age and was forced to drop out. However, Julie is currently enrolled in a GED program and hopes to be able to apply to DACA someday if the program opens to first-time applicants and she can obtain

a birth certificate. She describes the predicament of her everyday life below:

> I had just dropped off my son at school, I was driving, and accidentally made a U-turn where I wasn't supposed to. A cop stopped me and asked me for an ID. I told him I did not have an ID on me. I said I forgot it at home because I was scared. So, I went to court recently […] and the lady there said I have four months to bring my driver's license. If I prove that I have a license, they'll deduct the fine, and just charge me 25 dollars. So, I have until January, but if I don't bring my license, they're going to charge me more than 2,000 dollars. So, I'm just stuck. I'm just stuck in this situation.
> -Julie (Interview #40)

Legal exclusion materializes in Julie's life by way of not having access to being able to drive legally, work legally, establish credit, have access to higher education, and much more. DACA's restrictive qualification criteria acts as an internal U.S. border forcing Julie to remain outside of legal incorporation. Because Julie cannot lawfully drive, she now faces the legal repercussions in the form of a 2,000 dollar fine. In her interview Julie states that she does not have the money to pay this fine. Her lack of finances is also connected to her legal exclusion since Julie remains working in the informal sector because she does not have a work permit, and earns less than minimum wage at the same small local restaurant she worked at throughout high school.

DACA's restrictive qualification criteria acts as an internal legal U.S. border that also translates socially in Julie's personal life by forcing her to remain outside of societal incorporation. She must also face the social ramifications that come from being legally excluded. Although Julie is physically present in the U.S., in many ways she is stuck outside of society. Growing up undocumented without any type of government identification was especially hard for Julie socially. Although Julie describes herself as culturally American, immigration program requirements act like borders preventing her from being part of many of the social rights-of-passages that American teenagers take part in such as getting a driver's license. Additionally, she was not able to move out with friends because she lacks the finances and a credit score. Instead, Julie lives in a crowded apartment with her son and other family members. This is why Julie describes her situation as "being stuck." Barriers to inclusion are often invisible to those not living through situations like her own.

Other research participants who qualified for DACA but did not apply said they were unable to apply because they were afraid to give their information to the government because their family units include members with papers but also family members who are undocumented and cannot adjust their status. Nationwide, it is estimated that at least 16.7 million people are part of a mixed-status family (Mathema, 2017). Here "mixed-status" refers to a family unit consisting of at least one undocumented member and at least one other person with any immigrant legal status (i.e., legal permanent resident, U.S. Citizen) or temporary status (e.g., DACA).

Two research participants who did not apply to DACA over concerns for their undocumented family members was Stephanie (25 years old) and Yaneth (28 years old). They are two sisters from San Diego who at the time that DACA was announced still

had valid visitor's visas. Their family had planned to overstay the visas and the two sisters feared for their parents' safety. Stephanie and Yaneth live with their parents in the same household. So, the two sisters wondered what would become of their parents when they gave up all of their information to the United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) in order to apply to DACA. Stephanie and Yaneth's parents were also fearful of what might happen if their daughters applied to DACA. Stephanie explains the fear her family felt below:

> I knew that my parents were afraid, and this fear was transferred to me and my sister Yaneth. It was the fear of not knowing if Obama was going be re-elected back then in 2012. You know, even if he got re-elected. DACA is not a permanent fix, it is not even a law, it is an executive action.
> -Stephanie (Interview #39).

As evident by Stephanie's statement, the uncertainty of liminal legality and precarity of conditional programs like DACA made many individuals who qualified weary to apply. In this way, the unpredictability of immigration programs can act to exclude those who need them and their families by default. The work of Heide Castañeda demonstrates that "the construction of illegality for some members in a family influences opportunities and resources for all" (2019, p. 16). Studies demonstrate that when at least one member of the family household can gain even temporary statuses like DACA, all the members benefit (Castañeda, 2019; Aranda et al., 2020). Individuals leveraged new opportunities established through DACA to help their families by, for example, obtaining a loan to purchase a car, driving family members, opening a bank account, picking up prescription medications, and much more. In this way, the gains are distributed in mixed-status families. While there is no doubt that this places extra responsibilities and thrusts new roles on DACA beneficiaries, it also makes a positive impact on their families (Castañeda, 2019; Aranda et al., 2020).

The fear that Stephanie feels toward government programs permeates other social aspects of her life. In this way, the legal exclusion she experiences materializes in her social life as well. Stephanie says that she does not share her legal status with anybody, not even close friends. She fears for her own wellbeing and that of her family's. Stephanie disclosed that although she was close to her professors at the university she attended, she did not share her status with them. Stephanie wanted to share her status and felt dishonest by not doing it, but ultimately made the decision to protect herself and her family. Stephanie's story demonstrates how the uncertainty of immigration programs that are temporary and conditionally renewed aid in maintaining internal borders. They operate as a technology of control since internal borders deter those who qualify from applying. Additionally, being excluded can then negatively affect important social relationships as it did for Stephanie with her professors and friends she could not go out with.

Grew up in the United States but do not qualify for DACA

Besides those who qualified for DACA and could not apply, an equally large group of participants (7 individuals) in this study

were people who were left out of DACA because they did not qualify. Despite having been raised in the U.S., the majority of these study participants were unable to meet the age requirements. Most research participants in this study were brought to the U.S. as infants or young children (under the age of 5 years old). This makes the age restrictions embedded in the program seem even more irrelevant. Many of those who were too old to apply to DACA were brought to the country as babies.

Antonio (41 years old) and Marissa (40 years old) are two study participants who did not qualify for DACA because they were slightly over the age limit of 31 when DACA was announced in 2012. They are husband and wife who grew up in Orange County and were very excited when DACA was announced because they both aspire to obtain better paying jobs to support their two young sons. A work permit would allow them to work legally and search for work outside their current line of work, the restaurant industry. Unfortunately, the age requirements acted as an internal border of exclusion preventing this from happening. Antonio expresses his frustration below:

> We had all their requirements for DACA. We have everything because we graduated from a high school here in the U.S. Thank God. We have never been deported, we have never been to jail, nothing. So, we had everything but for the fact that we were just barely too old. When DACA was announced I was 33 and Marisa was 32. So, we couldn't apply, and I know a lot of other people that couldn't apply because of the age thing also. At first my mind was all like, "Finally, there is something that is going to help us." So, we were excited [...] and then when we didn't qualify for DACA, we were sad.
> -Antonio (Interview #27)

Because Marissa and Antonio were not able to receive DACA, they remain in jobs that are precarious and do not pay well. One of their life goals is to purchase a new car and someday a home as well, but without the benefits that DACA grants, they shared that this is unrealistic. As mentioned in an earlier section regarding DACA beneficiaries, national studies show that individuals who gained a work permit through the program experienced a considerable raise in their earnings. This allowed 65 percent of national study respondents to purchase their first car, and 24 percent of respondents 25 years and older to become first-time homeowners (Wong et al., 2017). Unfortunately, one of the ways that legal exclusion is experienced by Marissa and Antonio is by not being able to make these larger purchases.

Not all research participants in this study who are part of the 1.5 generation but did not qualify for DACA missed out due to their age. One individual, Jose, who is 18 years old, arrived in the U.S. in 2010, 3 years after the date of arrival cut-off of June 15, 2007. Jose explains that not being able to have access to DACA has negatively impacted his schooling. He recently graduated high school, is attending community college, and hopes to someday transfer to a 4-year university as a math major. However, his access to financial aid and scholarships are limited because of his immigration status:

> I actually think that because I do not have DACA, I missed out on big things. One of those big things is being able to work and bring in a steady income, especially me as a student. Books, tuition for classes, and materials all add up. For example,

> right now with the pandemic every student needs a computer because we're in online learning. I didn't have a computer. I can't work, so I can't buy a computer. I had to miss out on class. Sometimes I ask myself if I am going to have to drop out of college.
>
> -Jose (Interview #30)

Although Jose has been physically living in the U.S. for over two decades, he is not allowed to participate legally in society. In this way, the border is extended far beyond the physical demarcation of the nation affecting his everyday life by creating vulnerability. In his interview, Jose describes his lack of access to higher education as one of the most difficult things about being undocumented. Attending community college is a major component of his daily life and internal borders seep into this personal space producing precarity. This is once again testament to the fact that legal exclusion translates into social exclusion. Jose states that growing up he always felt that school was a place where he could thrive and feel safe. However, now in college, he feels that school has transformed into a place where he often feels vulnerable and inadequate. It is not uncommon for migrants to enjoy legal inclusion in primary and secondary school, but depending on the state, undocumented students can be banned from attending college altogether (Bravo-Moreno, 2009; Gonzales and Chavez, 2012).

Antonio's, Marissa's, and Jose's experiences reflect how arbitrary age and date requirements act as internal borders excluding members of the 1.5 generation from stepping out of illegality. Furthermore, it demonstrates how dated the DACA program is and the need for it to be updated or for a new more inclusive program altogether. In 2012 when DACA was enacted as an executive action, the requirement of residing in the U.S. since 2007 seemed more sensible since 2007 was only a few years in the past. At the time of this writing the year 2007 will soon be two decades in the past. The fact that no law has yet been passed to protect individuals like Antonio, Marissa and Jose says a lot about the current political climate in the U.S. and attitudes toward immigrants. This also demonstrates how everyday bordering is often simply formulated trough inaction in order to exclude, and it is testimony to the violence this unleashes on individuals.

Unable to renew DACA

Another way that immigration policy acts as an internal border for research participants in this study is through the liminality embedded in the DACA program. As mentioned previously, DACA must be conditionally renewed every 2 years and it is extremely expensive. Three individuals in this study do not have DACA protection because they were unable to renew their DACA. Participants cited the high cost of renewing and fear during the Trump administration as reasons for not renewing. Although only 3 individuals in this study were unable to renew, expired DACAs are a much larger issue. I met many individuals through immigrant organizations and at the Dreamer Center who fell out of DACA protection because they found renewal fees too expensive, or they

were afraid of giving more personal information to the government especially during Trump's presidency.

The financial burden of expensive renewal fees prevented DACA recipients in this study and in the country in general from renewing their DACA, and now find themselves without protection once more. To make matters worse, USCIS under the former Trump administration proposed an increase for renewal fees from 495 to 765 dollars (Vinopal, 2019; Garcia, 2020). If this proposed 55 percent hike does take effect, it would be catastrophical for individuals trying to remain in the program. This fee increase would be especially difficult for families who have multiple individuals who are DACA beneficiaries as the renewal fees are per individual not per family. The Immigrant Legal Resource Center, an organization seeking to improve immigration policy and advance immigrant rights, released a statement expressing that a fee hike could make it even more complicated for DACA recipients to remain in the U.S. (Vinopal, 2019).

As previously noted, one of the most precarious things about the liminality of DACA is that it is not a law, and this caused constant anxiety in the life of study participants. The experience of 26-year-old research participant, Elizabeth, demonstrates how DACA's liminality (both in the sense of it's precarity and high financial cost) materializes as an internal border further excluding those without DACA protections. Elizabeth originally had DACA but did not renew it because she did not have enough money for the renewal. She shares that she thinks that she might have been able to borrow the money from friends and family. However, she was also fearful after Trump was elected president. Elizabeth explains the fear she felt during the Trump presidency and the anxiety over the uncertainty of the program ending:

> I did not renew because there was a lot of people telling us not to renew because Trump got elected and he rescinded DACA. A lot of my friends were so paranoid, and I started listening to them. I was really scared and there were interviews going on the news. There were a lot of reports of undocumented people with DACA being deported. These reports were saying that some people were thinking that it wasn't okay, that we shouldn't renew. People thought that it was not a good idea to renew DACA because then they [the government] would track us down, and we would become easy targets for Trump's administration. So, I did not want them [border patrol] to come to my home and find where I'm at.
>
> -Elizabeth (Interview #2)

For Elizabeth and other recipients, the benefits of DACA do not outweigh the underlying uncertainty of the program (Patler et al., 2021). Individuals living in legal limbo are constantly forced to interact with state agencies to renew their work permits. They must submit to fingerprint and retinal scans for FBI background checks to prove clean criminal records and are thus over-surveilled (Asad, 2023; Menjívar, 2023). These encounters make the borders of the nation tangible to the 1.5 generation because it reaffirms that they are conditionally in the country, only temporarily protected, and always being watched. Because she did not renew her DACA, Elizabeth now further experiences internal borders through various types of exclusion in her everyday life. One of the ways this manifests is *via* her limited access to higher education since she

is barred from many types of financial aid. Elizabeth states that one of her main priorities is earning a bachelor's degree. However, she is ineligible for grants, fellowships, paid internships, and most scholarships. This greatly delimits her chances to earn enough community college credits to be able to transfer.

Ana, 22 years old from San Diego also did not renew her DACA. She states the lack of money as her reason for not renewing. Her parents brought her to the U.S. when she was 3 years old and before her work permit expired, she worked at Legoland and Sesame Place. Her jobs are two tourist attractions in Southern California and she really enjoyed working there, but is no longer able to since her work permit has expired. She discusses why she did not renew her work permit below and how much she misses working at her jobs:

> I feel that during that time I realized that my dad was the only one paying for rent, bills, groceries and other expenses for our family. So, I felt like I didn't want to put another weight on him. I did not want to burden him further. I didn't want him to have to spend more money when we were already very low on money. So, I decided like, oh, you know what, I'll do it eventually, just not now. Now my work permit has expired, and I can no longer work at Legoland and Sesame Place. It really sucks. I wish I would have had enough money to renew it.
>
> -Ana (Interview #13)

Both Elizabeth and Ana state money as a barrier to being able to renew their DACA. The high cost of immigration policy keeps many immigrants from moving out of undocumentedness or it forces them to return into the shadows by not being able to renew their work permits. These high costs of applying, renewing, and fee increases act as internal national borders to transitioning out and remaining out of illegality. Elizabeth and Ana are today more fearful than ever before because in addition to being undocumented, they must also worry about the fact that the government now has all their information—where they live, where they go to school, and who their previous employers were. Before DACA, they expressed that they had some sense of security in knowing that the government did not truly realize they existed. They feel that their expired DACA work permits puts a huge bull's eye on them and on the undocumented family members who live with them.

Denied DACA

Beyond not being able to renew DACA, two research participants in this study are not currently protected from deportation because they applied to DACA but were denied. DACA only had less than a 1 percent denial rate, but both participants were denied DACA because of minor run-ins with the law when they were younger. In order to qualify for DACA, one must go through an intense background check to verify an immaculate record. Under the qualification criteria, USCIS states that an applicant must not have any significant misdemeanors, but what counts as a "significant" misdemeanor is not defined. In this section, I tell the story of Carlos who was denied DACA due to a minor run-in with the police when he was a minor in high school.

Carlos' family brought him to the U.S. without documents when he was only a 1-month-old baby. Carlos, now 21 years old, lives in Orange County, and works with his father installing drywall. He is a community college student and one of his personal goals is to help his dad purchase a house someday. Carlos states that his academic objective is to transfer to a 4 year university, and earn a master's degree in a field of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). However, a run in with the law when he was 14 years old is making Carlos' aspirations difficult to achieve. In November of 2013 Carlos found the key to a local community outdoor recreation facility. Carlos thought it would be fun to go back to the recreation facility after hours and shoot hoops at the basketball court. He recounts what happened that evening (some details have been changed to protect Carlos' identity):

> For some reason, I decided to video record [on my phone] when I got to the place. But I wasn't trying to do anything bad, I just like found the key to it [the recreation facility]! So, I was just trying to get into the basketball court. That's all I was doing. And while I was doing that, I guess someone saw me and they called the police on me. And as a kid, you know, like, what do I do? I ran away, and they [the police] found me, and it was the gang unit that found me, and so they stopped me thinking I was part of a gang. Then the cops detained me, took me into the station, and they processed me. They [the police] charged me with attempted burglary. I think it is considered a misdemeanor.
>
> -Carlos (Interview #35)

Carlos applied to DACA in 2015 and a few months later he received a letter from the DHS stating that he needed to explain what had transpired in November of 2013. He also needed to provide proof of whether he was sentenced, and if so, he needed proof of completing his sentence. However, Carlos was never sent to court. Instead, Carlos was required to take classes for delinquent juveniles. Upon completion, he received a certificate, but Carlos and his family moved residences a lot and this document along with his police report were lost. Therefore, Carlos had to formally request his police report, but he encountered unsurmountable bureaucracy and was extremely intimidated. His petition to obtain the police report was denied three times. Carlos explains what happened next:

> At that point all I could do was send USCIS a letter explaining what had happened [in November of 2013]. After that, a few months later, USCIS sent me another letter saying that my application was denied. Honestly, I was really sad when I first found out that my DACA was rejected. I realized, I guess, how big consequences can be, like, how much the things you do… how much of a consequence they are when you are older. That was my first real realization that I shouldn't be doing stupid things. Uhm… honestly, I thought that since they [USCIS] denied my application that they were going to send out a deportation order right away. Well, I thought that was going to happen and I was really scared.
>
> - Carlos (Interview #35)

Carlos is unsure if he can reapply to DACA because the letter he received from USCIS stating that his DACA was denied does not have much information, and he is too scared to ask questions. The last thing Carlos wants is to bring attention to himself because he still fears that USCIS will send out a deportation order. Like many research participants in this study, he is also afraid for undocumented family members in his household. In this manner, the U.S.-Mexico border is re-bordered internally for Carlos and his family through court decisions and police inaction to issue necessary paperwork. His story is testament to how administrative inaction can be used to passively exclude individuals from incorporation. Gilmore refers to this inaction as "organized abandonment," through which the state controls and deprives some groups of social benefits (Gilmore, 2022). Similarly, Menjívar argues that the state creates social exclusion when it neglects devalued groups through disregard of bureaucratic responsibilities (2023).

Had Carlos been a U.S. citizen, the act of using the key he found to access the recreation facility would most likely not have much impact on his future chance for success. Perhaps his act of "trespassing" would have been regarded by the court simply as something that a young teenager did without really thinking about consequences. Unfortunately, that evening in November of 2013 is still haunting Carlos since his DACA was denied and he is consequently not able to work legally in the U.S. In this manner the police who charged him with attempted burglary, the staff who rejected his requests to acquire his criminal record, and the immigration officials who ultimately made the decision to deny Carlo's DACA application all become informal border guards impeding Carlos from moving out of undocumentedness.

Being forced to remain in illegality by informal border guards has repercussions far beyond Carlos' ability to work. His lack of legal status also makes him ineligible for paid internships (despite having various STEM certifications) and most school scholarships, financial aid, grants, and fellowships. Additionally, since Carlos is forced to work under the table, he cannot provide proof of income, which means that he cannot apply for a house loan. This breaks his heart because, as mentioned earlier, he really wants to help his father purchase a house. Carlos' father also works under the table, and neither can provide solid proof of being employed to a bank. In his interview, Carlos shared that the most disheartening thing about not being able receive DACA is not being able to work legally since it makes it almost impossible to become a homeowner.

Discussion and conclusion

As DACA's future and that of individuals like Carlos hangs in the uncertain balance of future court decisions, it is important to remember that DACA's termination would mean that as a society, the U.S. would be shutting out members who are part of our communities. This would also be accompanied by a financial cost to the local and national economy as well as a blow to the U.S. labor force. Analysis by FWD.us estimates that if DACA is terminated

and beneficiaries are allowed to keep their work permits until they expire, it would cost the U.S. 22,000 jobs a month, every month for the next 2 years (Connor, 2022). Put another way, this means 1,000 individuals would be forced to leave their jobs every business day for the next 2 years, which would be detrimental to communities and families (Connor, 2022). The end of DACA would also mean that every day for 2 years, nearly 1,000 immediate U.S. citizen family members will witness a loved one be put at immediate deportation risk, and their ability to stay in the U.S. would be greatly compromised.

The end of DACA would also mean continuing to leave out individuals from our society who know no other home than the U.S. In this way restrictive policy and court decisions would continue to act as internal borders of exclusion by design for the 1.5 generation. Excluding undocumented individuals from immigration policy ultimately leaves large populations in the shadows and outside the limits of societal inclusion. As evident by this study and mounting scholarly evidence, exclusion hampers immigrants educational prospects, employment opportunities, marginalizes them, and makes them live in fear for themselves and their families (Massey, 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011; Menjívar and Kanstroom, 2014; Menjívar, 2023). Additionally, restrictive immigration policy and court decisions artificially stifles and blocks legal immigration.

The 1.5 generation is one of many immigrant groups who are pushed further into precarity as the nation state utilizes any crisis event like September 11, 2001, a pandemic, or recession to bolster the "homeland security state" and strengthen controls in immigrant communities (Gonzales, 2013). These practices are parallel to what many political geographers are referring to as "internal bordering" (Dear, 2013). De Genova puts it best when he states, that in innumerable places of Mexican immigrants' day-to-day life "'illegality' reproduces the practical repercussions of the physical border between the U.S. and Mexico" (De Genova, 2004, p. 161).

Regarding the current growing worldwide trend of immigration regimes that offer no pathways to citizenship, Hiroshi Motomura observes that immigrants are no longer intended to become future naturalized citizens. Instead, the rationale that has become much too common in countries of the global north in only offering temporary statuses, like the one DACA provides, is precisely that immigrants will never be allowed to become full and included members of society (Motomura, 2006; Smith, 2022). In addition, these programs—and the individuals they protect—often face urgent legal threats as is the case with DACA. In this way, immigrant lives and their opportunities are forced into extreme precarity, and immigrant communities must endure different types of legal and physical violence.

Despite DACA's overwhelming success at incorporating into society those who did benefit from the program through things such as improved employment opportunities, this study's findings demonstrate that DACA's excluding nature acted as an internal border further preventing incorporation into U.S. society. The key findings of this article are testimony to how restrictive immigration policy can proliferate internal borders, which can be equally as harmful as more traditional forms of bordering. Beyond the exclusionary mechanisms embedded in immigration programs like

DACA, internal borders are often created and maintained through inaction. For example, everyday border guards like the ones Carlos encountered at the police station would not issue necessary paperwork required in order to apply to the DACA program.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because this research data base is not allowed to be shared by IRB protocol. It is stored in the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to LS, lindaes@uci.edu.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of California, Irvine. The IRB waived the requirement for written informed consent to be obtained. Oral consent for participation was obtained and documented via digital recording.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Sheltering difference: (un)doing the migrant/volunteer divide through sheltering practices in Mexico and the Netherlands

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While acknowledging the important role of shelter organizations in protecting migrant rights, recent debates point to the thin line between care and control practices within shelters. This study seeks to deepen this observation by approaching shelters as spaces defined by a constant inward/outward mobility of people. From this starting point, we use the de-migranticization framework to understand and question the normalization of difference that divides migrant people (being reproduced as the typical guest) from international volunteers (being reproduced as the typical host) through sheltering practices in two rather different geopolitical contexts (Mexico and the Netherlands). We use our ethnographic insights to not only illustrate how difference is reproduced but also to analyze the practices that seek to transgress and undo these divides. We argue that highlighting the conviviality and interconnectedness between these differentiated actors in the broader context of cross-border mobility is of vital importance to question and overcome the coloniality of contemporary border regimes. However, we do not imply that these aspects have the potential to completely undo difference, as they are a constant struggle embedded in the relational practices of the people composing such a divide.

KEYWORDS

sheltering practices, difference, interconnectedness, de-migranticization, conviviality, categorization

1. Introduction

Migrant shelters play a crucial role in people's erratic migratory processes across violent borders (Olayo-Méndez et al., 2014; Jones, 2017). They form important humanitarian infrastructures of protection for people who often find themselves outside the protection of the state. Migrant shelters are also important points for re-energizing people's journey, social networking, and emotional support. In this sense, migrant shelters in different places in the world function as important counter-hegemonic infrastructures in relation to strict border regimes. At the same time, and without disregarding their crucial role for people on the move, shelters are often discussed in academia in relation to the notion of humanitarianism (e.g., Sandri, 2018; Gomez et al., 2020; see also: Cuttitta, 2018). Several studies indicate that the practices of care by shelters do merge with the practice of control and discipline (e.g., Ticktin, 2011, 2016). In that sense, shelters indeed house their bordering dynamics (Angulo-Pasel, 2022). As a consequence of this care/control function, a particular imaginary of the

prototypical migrant—as someone always in need, as someone vulnerable and agency-less, and as someone inherently different—tends to be reproduced over time. This study aims to delve further into the issue of how these social boundaries are made and unmade through practices of sheltering. This is particularly important since we have noticed that sheltering practices may in fact perpetuate migration management logics (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021). This study builds on discussions around the humanitarian dimension of shelters and positions the question of sheltering within the so-called reflexive turn in migration studies.

The reflexive turn in migration studies centers around the question of how migration-related differences are produced and maintained in societal and academic knowledge production. One of the leading questions is how some cross-border mobilities are *turned into* particular forms of migration (Schapendonk, 2020; Amelina, 2021), while other similar mobilities are not labeled as such. Hence, this study addresses the problem of how migration-related differences are produced, particularly in the case of the fixed categorization of "the migrant," placed in relation to the person meant to assist him/her/them referred as "the volunteer." To analyze and contest such production of difference, we first attempt to de-migranticize (Dahinden, 2016) our analysis of the shelter. This implies that we seek to contest what seems to "divide" the people embodying such categories. This analytical step is crucial to *re*-politicize and fundamentally question certain taken-for-granted markers of difference that might be rather in line with the agendas of border regimes instead of being a true contestation of the same. From there, we analyze moments, situations, and practices where sheltering articulates migration-related differences as well as moments, situations, and practices that naturally overcome the same. Our analysis may not only fuel discussions on reflexivity in migration studies, but it ideally also informs the sheltering practices themselves, examining the extent to which these are part of the relentless fixation of bodies situated at border regions, in categories such as "the migrant," "the asylum seeker," "the undocumented," and "the refugee." Out-of-norm bodies, contained and objectified by state and academic migration apparatuses via the migranticization of their lives and mobilities (Dahinden, 2016), are differentiated according to the same logic that has historically legitimized the conception of borders and the state's sovereign power to exclude racialized non-national subjects, based on their (de)humanization (Mbembe, 2003; Lugones, 2010; Walia, 2013; Achiume, 2019). With this critical standpoint, we aim to contribute to this Special Issue (Ryan et al., this issue) by not only advancing knowledge on sheltering practices at the border and the relational politics involved but also by reflecting on the empirical and ethical challenges related to this research. In this process, we rely on the so-called methodological backstage approach (Aparna et al., 2020), which articulates the importance of scholarly reflexivity in questions of borders, emotional labor, and power asymmetries in fieldwork practices.

This study is based on long-standing ethnographic engagements with two shelter organizations being embedded in very different geo-political settings: southern Mexico and the Netherlands. The shelter organization in Mexico called *Casa para Todes* (House for Everyone)[1], is embedded in a violent landscape of

undocumented migration (Vogt, 2013; Estévez, 2014) historically shaped by the United States migration policy. In general, shelters in Mexico work as important stepping stones for people's trajectories, and they form a networked infrastructure for people on the move (e.g., Marchand, 2020; Wurtz, 2020). The shelter organization in the Netherlands called *Iedereen Welkom* (Everyone Welcome) is embedded in a typically Western European welfare-state model. However, especially in the last decade, the socio-political climate of shelter organizations is characterized by austerity politics. In contrast with the Mexican case, it is often considered that shelters in the Netherlands work with people at the end of a migratory trajectory. Such a narrative is instrumentalized by the state by integrating these kinds of non-governmental organizations into a deportation continuum (Kalir and Wissink, 2016), seeking to reinforce the already restrictive access to asylum in Europe. However, as we will see, the sheltering dynamics in place are often more complex.

The following sections are written mostly in first person from the first author's voice, as most of the ethnographic material comes from his experience. However, the second and third authors are within the "we," constantly referred to throughout the text. Our argument does not place "the migrant" or "the volunteer" voices at the center, it rather highlights the relational processes and performativities in which these actors are embedded, instead of their personal views and narratives as isolated subjects. We start by discussing our analytical approach to sheltering practices, categorization as processes for differentiation, and the de-migranticization of the migrant/volunteer divide. Then, the methodological choices and ethnographic approach are explained. Subsequently, we use ethnographic material to depict the shelters' daily practices in three empirical sections. First, we start with our attempt to de-migranticize the narrative by looking at people's motives, interests, and geopolitical privilege defining their trajectories. This leads to a lexicon of *people looking for shelter* and *people looking to shelter*. This is not trivial as the usual divide of "migrants" vs. "volunteers" hides several particularities involved, such as the fact that volunteers do often have a history of migration themselves. Second, we look at the practices that articulate differences. Here, we discuss the shelter's intake process and the effects of linguistic plasticity in the use of labels. Finally, we show how the migrant/volunteer divide is transgressed and momentarily undone. Our conclusions draw on the reflections regarding our main findings, opening the question of how we—as academics—can learn from the sheltering practices under study?

2. Sheltering as doing migration: an analytical lens

Shelters have been understood as places where housing and humanitarian response are provided, especially in emergency contexts of displacement (Colosio, 2020), but also as processes rather than objects (e.g., Davis, 1978). Recent efforts to nuance the definition of shelter, propose "sheltering" as "an enabled process to facilitate a living environment with crisis-affected communities and individuals, to meet their current and future needs" (George et al., 2022, p. 12). Thus, understanding sheltering as a process, shelters as living environments where "guests" and "hosts" intermingle, and

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1   For both shelters, we prefer to use pseudonyms.

the goal of shelters to satisfy both actors' current and future needs are prominent elements in our analysis.

A fundamental aspect of sheltering processes at the organizations presented in this study is the differentiation made between people addressed as "migrants" and "volunteers," and we refer to this as the migrant/volunteer divide. We consider such a divide to be related to modernity's categorization practices that are so dominantly present in questions of migration (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). With different articulations—from border imperialism (Walia, 2013) to departheid (Kalir, 2019)—different authors stress the deep coloniality involved in categorizations by migration regimes (see also Lugones, 2010; Amelina, 2022; Wemyss, 2023; in this special issue). As argued elsewhere (Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021), we position the sheltering practices "on the ground" as an inherent aspect of the global migration governance architecture (van Riemsdijk et al., 2021), instead of practice outside that domain. Shelters, in other words, are not underground initiatives that destabilize the logics of borders and migration apparatuses. Instead of "un-making the border" (e.g., Peterson, 2020; Sandberg and Andersen, 2020), these shelters exist because of the border logic. However, in our view, that does not mean that shelter organizations resemble Goffman's (1961) notion of total institution. Although we do recognize some elements of discipline in our study, the sheltering practices discussed below are less absolute and less stable than Goffman's concept.

We aim to highlight the "politicizing function of the 'naming' and 'renaming' of categories of migrant mobility and experience" (Robertson, 2019, p. 229). In doing so, we depart from Amelina's (2021, 2022) notion of "doing migration," which "refers to all social practices that, being linked to specific categorizations and narratives of belonging, membership and deservingness (i.e., discursive knowledge), turn mobile (and often also immobile) individuals into 'migrants'" (Amelina, 2021, p. 2). Amelina, thus, proposes to analyze the social practices distinguishing "migrants" from "non-migrants" at institutional, organizational, and interactional levels. This approach helps to understand the behaviors associated with each category, in relation to classifications based on gender, ethnicity, race[2], class, space, and other "categories of inequality" (Amelina, 2021, p. 3). At the interactional level of shelter organizations, multiple narratives making distinctions between us and them are performed on daily face-to-face routines. Although such narratives indeed subject people to "migrant" or "volunteer" positions, the previous analysis showed that people also perform multiple narratives using "floating signifiers" to negotiate their positionality and to better navigate the shelter's power dynamics (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Merlín-Escorza et al., 2021). Our interest is to focus on the mechanisms that facilitate these transitions or *passings* between narratives and performativities of "migrant" and "non-migrant" at the shelters' interactive level.

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2   Even though we acknowledge the notion of race as a socially constructed one, we highlight the fact that for various actors embedded in migration regimes and architectures, race is used as a marker by the Mexican National Migration Institute's (INM) agents, who detain people moving across borders based on racial profiling.

For this purpose, we follow Janine Dahinden's suggestion to "de-migranticize" migration studies (Dahinden, 2016). Similarly to Amelina, Dahinden points out the discursive normalization of categories such as "migrant" and "refugee" by the migration apparatus of nation-states and academia, specifically referring to migration and integration scholars. For her, the problem lies in the way in which migration research is marked by an epistemology that normalizes "migration- and ethnicity-related difference," being the "national-container" logic of inclusion and exclusion, "the most important reference system for empirical research and theories" (Dahinden, 2016, p. 2,209). To move beyond such normalization, Dahinden proposes to re-orient the focus of investigation away from "migrant populations" toward overall populations and distinguish common-sense categories from analytical ones (Dahinden, 2016).

We combine Amelina and Dahinden's proposals to analyze different sheltering practices. We focus on the im/mobility of "entire populations" related to the shelter, instead of focusing on the exceptionalized movements of the "migrant other" only, doing so by juxtaposing the motives, interests, and needs of differentiated populations in sheltering practices. Here, we are inspired by Malkki's (2015) work on Finnish Red Cross voluntary aid workers, where she questions the "basic assumptions about who *the needy* are in the humanitarian encounter," and how subjectivities producing the humanitarian self, shape voluntary aid workers' personal trajectories and "professional habitus" (p. 3). In addition, we examine the *doings* of the divide between guests and hosts and between migrants and volunteers by discussing specific sheltering practices, doing so by investigating what kinds of *labeling* are practiced and performed in the shelters that correspond to discourses upholding the divide between guests and hosts, pointing also to *practices of de-migranticization,* i.e., where seemingly natural orders of us vs. them are contested and to a certain degree subverted.

By moving beyond the divide, we work toward "interconnectedness," as Tendayi Achiume elaborates in *Migration as Decolonization* (Achiume, 2019). Her analysis denounces the dogmatic logic of territorial nation-state sovereignty, and she refers to the marginalization of so many migrants today and fundamentally questions the state's right to exclude for "reasons tied to the distributive and corrective justice implications of the legacies of colonialism" (p. 1,517). Her critique of nation-states' sovereign right to exclude non-nationals is followed by a redefinition of sovereignty that acknowledges the political interconnectedness between former colonial subjects with the current "neocolonial empire" (p.1,520), proposing an approach to migration in which subjects from colonized nations are seen as "co-sovereign members (…) entitled to a say in the vehicles of effective collective self-determination" (p. 1,520). Similarly, Gilroy powerfully claims that "the little-known historical facts of Europe's openness to the colonial worlds …must be employed to challenge fantasies of the newly embattled European region as a culturally bleached or politically fortified space (Gilroy, 2004, p. 155–156)."

We see the transformative potential in approaching sheltering practices through interconnectedness. To specify this, we focus on spaces of conviviality. Conviviality, a notion that has different origins but relates in the first place to Gilroy's (2004) arguments

on multicultural Europe and racial divides—articulates forms of cohabitation that transcend prescribed racialized social positions (see also Valluvan, 2016; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2020; Guadeloupe, 2022). In that sense, conviviality is the transformative power of renegotiating relations that emerge everyday—and in parallel to racialized structures—and that result in new forms of solidarity and social justice (Valluvan, 2016; see also Lapina, 2016). In the context of the shelters, however, we did not perceive conviviality as uncontested emergence that has the power to undo difference, as in the case of metropolitan dynamics and translocal culture discussed by Gilroy. We rather approach it as a constant struggle embedded in the relational practices of people looking for shelter as well as people looking to shelter. A struggle, nonetheless, may not undo differences and divides but does stretch and subvert its boundaries.

3. Methodological backstage approach

This study is framed in a project that aims to better understand the practices of two shelter organizations in Mexico and the Netherlands, by critically looking at the discourses and performativities of people interacting in them. We have used relational ethnography to qualitatively analyze the data collected in fieldwork periods between 2020 and 2022. Through this approach, the observations focused on the interactions of "two types of actors or agencies occupying different positions within the social space" bounded "together in a relationship of mutual dependence or struggle" (Desmond, 2014, p. 555); analyzing "fields rather than places, boundaries rather than bounded groups," and "processes rather than processed people" (Desmond, 2014, p. 574). The observations are written from an autoethnographic and reflexive position (Denshire, 2014). In addition, the project relies on a combination of tools for ethnographic research, such as participatory observations and semi-structured and open interviews with a wide variety of actors. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants of this study, and this was documented via audio recordings.

In this study, we foreground reflexivity using a backstage approach (Aparna et al., 2020), which although it is not a direct reference to the well-known work of Goffman (1959), is inspired by a theater setting where artists preparing in the backstage look into the mirror before they perform. However, we acknowledge that the use of this metaphor in social research is not new. In his study with refugee communities, Miller (2004) reflects on his position as a researcher who is also an outsider, in relation to the access to these communities and the meaningfulness of the data collected. For that, he uses the "metaphor of frontstage and backstage behavior to illustrate both the complexity and importance of developing relational contexts that are based on trust" (p. 218), which he addresses as an outstanding "methodological issue in research with socially marginalized, politically oppressed communities" (p. 218). Despite Miller's valuable insights, his use of the backstage metaphor, in relation to Goffman's work, centers on questioning the degree of reliability of the information that participants provide to a researcher; hence, the importance of building trust to gain accessibility to such personal "backstage" where more

authentic information can be found. Our use of backstage differs from Miller's, as we see the backstage as a space for academic reflexivity, where we can destabilize our privileges, recall our doubts and uncertainties, redirect our academic gazes, and seek for other ways of knowing (Aparna et al., 2020). In this study, the autoethnographic method is not only a data collection method but also a way of foregrounding the backstage as it allows for continuous problematization of the researcher situatedness, and his/her/their work in the overall processes of knowledge production.

Speaking from the methodological backstage aims to "critically re-look, (dis/re)engage, or deviate" from "dominant academic practices (…) one is trained in or expected to demonstrate expertise on" (Aparna et al., 2020, p. 111). Keeping "accountable to our own messy role in the messy processes of *re-searching*" in highly politicized fields of study allows us to critically reflect on the normalization of methods and "objects of inquiry" (Aparna et al., 2020) that might (un)wittingly contribute with border regimes and migration apparatuses. Backstaging our methodological choices helped us understand how power shapes our "fieldwork encounter(s)," the influence of our positionality in relation to the socio-political struggle over "what knowledges come to matter and why," and the "direct links between academic work and border devices" (Aparna et al., 2020, p. 111). It inspired us to question the use of "migration" and "migration-related categories" and prevented us from taking volunteer or migrant as fixed and static categories.

Our analysis and writing style juxtaposes the experiences of people typically migranticized with those who are typically not. My (methodological) choice of working as a volunteer at both shelter organizations to embody such a role became particularly important for the auto-ethnographic insights, which I used as a research method, writing tool, and approach to dialogue with my own and others' experiences in "the field" (e.g., Denshire, 2014). Interestingly, this strategy helped me realize the multiple performativities embedded in my mobility processes, embodying the researcher who can move in and out of the field, the volunteer working for these organizations, and the migrant crossed by privilege and precarity. It is important to mention that in the process of writing, we experienced a constant tension between the analytic and descriptive parts of our texts. Even though we have defined "migrant" and "volunteer" as our analytical starting point, and even though we invented our terms such as "people looking for shelter" and "people looking to shelter," the dispute over the meaning and usage of these words serves as an account of such "plasticity." Similar to what happens within the shelters' dynamics, our writing shows the interchangeability of labels according to the specific part of the message we want to convey. Such multiplicity of terms helped us weigh our attempt to de-migranticize our narrative as an onerous one. We acknowledge that our writing choices might be overwhelming to some readers, but we hope that these readers take the shifts in terminologies as an invitation to reflect on the complexity that such effort to de-migranticize entails.

Although the organizations we worked with provide similar kinds of assistance to people on the move, their position in wider geopolitical landscapes of the migration regimes is rather different. Located close to the southern border of Mexico, Casa para Todes

is part of a regional context particularly violent for marginalized populations, including the people crossing the border into the country without the authorization of the Mexican immigration authority. Since its creation, Casa para Todes has worked as a shelter providing "humanitarian assistance," such as food, clothing, and basic medical aid, and as a "human rights center" advocating for the regularization of the people's migratory status. For over 10 years, they have sustained a clear politicized position in denouncing the violence(s) produced by the regional migration regime(s) and the abuses of the national and local immigration and law enforcement institutions.

Located at the eastern border of the Netherlands, Iedereen Welkom is part of a differently violent regional context. People staying in shelter organizations as Iedereen Welkom experience the violence of living without access to basic rights, such as housing, work, healthcare, and education. This relates to what Davies et al. (2017) and Mayblin et al. (2020) discuss as the "violent inaction" and "the slow violence of the everyday." The priority of Iedereen Welkom is to provide a dignifying facility where "homeless undocumented refugees" (Iedereen Welkom's website 2020) can shower, eat, and stay for the night. In contrast with Casa para Todes, Iedereen Welkom's position, regarding the advocacy regarding people's oppression by the Dutch migration regime, seems less politicized. However, it is part of a network of organizations contesting in practice the effects of Dutch and EU's migration policy, denouncing at times, state projects that aim to normalize a narrative of forced return (Kalir and Wissink, 2016) for undocumented non-nationals, as it is the case for the *Landelijke Vreemdelingen Voorziening LVV* (The National Aliens' Facilities). Thus, an important aspect of our analysis of these organizations is the attempt to acknowledge the similarity in the dynamics making and unmaking the divide, and the structural "fabrics" in which such phenomena acquire significance.

4. Entangling trajectories: motives, interests, and privileges

Despite having moved (or not) across national borders in contrasting ways due to migration policies and border controls, the trajectories of so-called "migrants" and so-called "volunteers" entangle while interacting in the shelter's dynamics. In this section, we first present two vignettes that deliberately juxtapose people's experience at Casa para Todes and reflect on their need to be at the shelter, focusing on their motives "to look for" and "look to" shelter. Subsequently, we relate these needs to the question of geopolitical privilege. Aiming to de-migranticize our narrative through such reflections, we uncover the characteristic ambivalence of people's trajectories composed by both actors' need to experience the shelter, as they continue developing these and their careers.

4.1. De-migranticizing motives in the shelter

Vignette 1.

Andrés came to the shelter carrying almost no luggage, a few expectations and quite some knowledge of that place, it was

the second time he was there. He had entered the country a couple of days before and needed information to know more about the current regional context. For that, he thought the best would be to stay at the shelter for some time. As he had done before, he kept planning the next steps in his journey, thinking on which paths to take, and imagining future possibilities and opportunities. He knew that once again, he would have to contribute to the shelter with work, both because he felt obliged to give something back but also because it felt right. After being interviewed by a shelter's worker, being explained and accepted the rules, he was allowed to enter. After resting from the journey, he started helping out with different chores, storing of food and cooking, cleaning, taking care of others, and making sure that people in the house followed the rules. He appreciated the help and information he received from the shelter's workers and the people that crossed borders like him. He did not mind much for sleeping in a room with many other people, eating the same food as everyone, waking up very early in the morning or negotiating different kinds of agreements with "the volunteers." All of these things were worth the stay (Diary notes, February, 2018).

Vignette 2.

Cesar came to the shelter carrying light luggage, a few expectations and quite some knowledge of that place, it was the second time he was there. He had entered the country a couple of weeks before and needed information to know more about the current regional context, specifically about the work done at the shelter. For that, he thought the best would be to stay in it for some time. As he had done before, he kept planning the next steps in his journey, thinking on which paths to take, and imagining future possibilities and opportunities. He knew that working as a volunteer was demanding, but also that once again he would learn much from it, and also, it felt right. After being interviewed by a shelter's worker, being explained and accepted the rules, he was allowed to enter. After resting from the journey, he started helping out with different chores, logistics and organization of activities, cleaning, taking care of others, and making sure that people in the house followed the rules. He appreciated the help and information he received from the shelter's workers and the people he was supposed to help. He did not mind much for sleeping in a room with a few other people, eating the same food as everyone, waking up very early in the morning or negotiating different kinds of agreements with "the migrant people." All of these things were worth the stay (Diary notes, April, 2021).

These vignettes juxtapose the contrasts and similarities regarding the mobility, motives, journeys, and activities inside the shelter, between a "migrant" and a "volunteer" living at Casa para Todes. Presented in vignette 2, I have volunteered two times at Casa para Todes at the same time I did my ethnographic work. Andrés, presented in vignette 1, stayed at the shelter also for the second time after having reached the northern border of Mexico and crossed into the United States, then for some reason, he went back to Honduras. Like me, Andrés too volunteered, working in the shelter's kitchen and the guard. We both embodied multiple roles and migrant stories at the very same time. During Andrés' stay, he spent time asking others about the safety of the route in the region, the current situation at the US and Mexico border-crossing,

and the speed through which asylum cases were being received and resolved by the Mexican immigration authority. These moments of inquiry are indeed similar to those framed in my research as "data collection." Interestingly, in this Mexican case, there is no limit to the amount of time so-called "migrants" are allowed to stay in the shelter. For so-called volunteers, there is a short stay of 2 months and a long stay of maximum 1 year. The short-stay volunteers live in the shelter, although they sleep in dormitories separated from the rest of the "migrant" guests. This temporal divide already indicates that questions of hosts vs. guests can work out in highly confusing ways as many of the "typical hosts" are actually passers-by.

By mirroring or juxtaposing these actors, we do not question the need for safety for some, and the specific expertise in terms of care of others. However, speaking with Malkki (2015) reveals a coeval, co-present neediness and interest situated on the "giving side" and the "receiving end" (p. 8). The fixation of both in a dichotomy of needs vs. interests reinforces the idea that migrants are exclusively driven by the need for something, *especially* to live, and that volunteers are exclusively driven by the interest to be involved and to discover more about something specific in the context where the shelter is situated. Such dichotomization happens at the level of the shelter's narrative, at the level of state migration policy, and at the level of academic knowledge production on migrant mobilities and sheltering practices. Instead, recognizing the specific motivations and neediness of both the "humanitarian aid recipient" and the "humanitarian benefactor" (Malkki, 2015) suggests the possibility of undoing the divide (as a distinction) between these subjects. Therefore, we argue that these vignettes help us acknowledge that, despite having aspects in common, both persons' experiences in the shelter are different mainly due to structural conditions inside and outside it.

It is the articulation (Laclau, 1996) of opposing discourses about "humanitarian benefactor" and humanitarian aid recipient" that occurs within shelters, that renders motives, needs, and interests as empty signifiers, which get a different—and often not acknowledged—meaning through the sheltering practices and performativities of the actors involved. Andrés and I had quite different experiences crossing the border and moving through Mexico, and yet we both did it, as well as we have both come back to the shelter and volunteered in it. In the end, the power imbalances produced by the migration regime have shaped our trajectories, as also the categories we have embodied. Due to the normalization of a narrative telling that migrants need the shelter, while volunteers are just interested in it, it is not possible to see that both actors need (to be at/to experience) the shelter, as much as they are interested in getting something from it.

4.2. Geopolitical privilege: trajectories and careers

Oscar and I met at Iedereen Welkom. He is a middle-aged man who came to the Netherlands partly due to the multi-layered violence he experienced in his country of origin, but also because he was "searching for a normal life" (diary notes, October 2020). He had lived in the shelter for at least 2 years. Back in his country, Oscar worked in the hospitality sector for a long time, but having no citizen service number (BSN) in the Netherlands, excluded him from accessing an education program that would validate his knowledge and professional experience. On December 2020, Oscar was expelled from the shelter due to a drug-related issue. He changed his phone number and practically disappeared. This situation made me question how discipline and control are enforced on the people that Iedereen Welkom and similar shelter organizations are supposed to care for. On September 2021, I heard from one of the persons staying at the shelter that Oscar was in Spain, where he had applied for asylum. In the meantime, he had been "allowed" by the local municipality in Spain to enroll in an education program that would certify his knowledge and work experience in the hospitality business. Whereas, his life in the Netherlands stagnated, over there, he was able to finish his education program, he lived in an apartment, and started looking for a job at a five-star hotel in just a few months (diary notes, April-June 2022).

In August 2020, I started working as a volunteer at Iedereen Welkom as part of my fieldwork activities. Different from my Dutch coworkers at the shelter, I am "allowed" to live in the Netherlands with a temporary residence permit which expires on the same date as my PhD contract. The process through which I arrived and then stayed in this country for almost 5 years has been determined by gender, ethnicity, and class markers (Amelina, 2021, p. 3) composing my "geopolitical privilege." Identifying and navigating society as a cis-gender, mestizo man from Mexico City, has certainly shaped my trajectory as a "migration scholar," but also as a "migrant," having my mobility influencing my career, and vice versa. In 2018, after my graduation as a master's student, I extended my residence permit for 1 year, by paying the immigration authorities for a procedure called *zoekjaar* (orientation year). This procedure permits "highly skilled migrants" who have graduated from a higher education program at a Dutch institution to look for formal employment. I was able to apply to such a master's program by proving my English proficiency level through a *Toefl* test, something partly possible due to me and my parents' life-long investments in my education. What also helped me have a fluent domain of the English language was the fact that I had spent a couple of years working in the United States. In my early 20's, I traveled to this country with a tourist visa and worked "informally" in a restaurant, in precarious working conditions and having no access to social security. I am now considering applying for a permanent residence in the Netherlands to go on with my "career."

For a variety of reasons, and coming from different contexts, Oscar and I ended up in the Netherlands ultimately looking to improve our lives. Our uneven life situations, in terms of privilege, determined the way we crossed borders, and the categories *ongedocumenteerde vreemdeling* (undocumented alien) and *kennismigrant* (highly skilled migrant) imposed on us by the Dutch state. Despite how migration regimes have governed our mobilities, we continued developing our careers as our trajectories unfolded. These life-story portraits show our passings between regularity and irregularity, precarity and stability, and mobility and immobility. Such passings are also moments in which we have been migranticized, in more privileged or unprivileged ways by the migration regime's apparatus. This structure has

ultimately articulated our migratory status with the (in)accessibility to employment and education, "allowing" us to do, and be, just as much as our geopolitical privilege allows us. Even though this section puts central the micropolitics of the encounter of Oscar and myself in the shelter, it does address at the same time how geopolitical privilege can be understood as a constellation of political, cultural, and economic forces that place people in the shelter in particular ways. While acknowledging the influence that migration policy and architectures have in differentiating people's mobilities, this section emphasized the common places (the shelter), common drivers (motives and interests), and common aspirations and realizations (trajectories and careers) of people interacting at these shelter organizations.

5. Doing migration through administration and labeling

By starting from the idea that migration-related difference is an outcome of social practices, this section delves into two of them: administration and labeling. For the administration, we focus on the intake process for newly arrived people at Casa para Todes, relating it to the intake process at Iedereen Welkom. We describe the moment of the interview, framing it as a mechanism that reinforces the categories of "migrant" and "volunteer," based on gender-, ethnicity-, and class-related differentiations. Subsequently, we discuss the practice of labeling. We do not only highlight how different labels are used, but we reflect on the effects they have on the daily interactions at the shelter.

5.1. The intake process

Vignette 3.

When they arrive to Casa para Todes, people looking for shelter are interviewed by a volunteer in a room where a desk separates the newly-arrived "guest" from the many times recently-arrived "host." Volunteers are instructed to detect if the interviewee has experienced any kind of violence during their journey and evaluate the urgency of subsequent actions, especially if he/she/they have been injured, sexually assaulted, extorted or kidnapped, minding the level of distress and trauma such person might be experiencing. First, questions eliciting name, age, sex, nationality, place of birth, gender identity, mother language, religion, marital status, number of children, and trade or profession are asked. Then, questions eliciting the person's reasons for migrating, point of departure, border-crossing locations, means of transportation, time-line of their current journey, number and place of detentions by immigration authorities, and number and place of deportations. Finally, questions regarding encounters with security and containment forces like immigration agents, police and military corps, encounters with smugglers, and encounters with robbers and/or people who have harmed them in any way. Altogether, this information helps the shelter organization defining who are the people they host, how their trajectories look like, and to

document and denounce the violence and abuses by state and non-state actors.

Vignette 4.

Before they arrive, people looking to shelter are required to fill out a form online, then a paid staff member of Casa para Todes interviews them. Since most of them live somewhere else in Mexico or abroad, the interviews happen mostly online. In the form, candidates are asked how they found out about the shelter and its volunteering service, whether they have previous experience in migration-related work or "vulnerable groups," and what do they think they can contribute to, in terms of their abilities, knowledges, relevant experiences, hobbies, etc. At the interview, information regarding the candidate's level of study, professional formation and experience doing voluntary work, is discussed more in detail. Altogether, this information helps the staff member(s) responsible for selecting and managing the voluntary workers, to define who they are and where do they come from, as well as trying to foresee the impact of their work on the wellbeing of those hosted by the shelter.

These vignettes briefly describe the intake processes at Casa para Todes. It is important to acknowledge that the information elicited in the interview with so-called migrants helps to detect the circumstances in which each person arrives to better assist them. So it does for documenting changes in migration flows, people's containment and authority abuse by state actors, and the perpetration of crimes against people en route through Mexico. In this way, Casa para Todes contributes to a network of researchers and organizations advocating for the protection of "migrant populations" and broader changes in the migration policy (Wurtz, 2020). It is nevertheless problematic that the intake process for "the migrant" emphasizes the exceptionality of their mobility trajectory, being imposed by the state logics of criminalized migrations and following gender-, ethnicity-, and class-related markers. On the contrary, such markers are mostly overlooked in the intakes for volunteering candidates. Both intakes work on the assumption that the interviewees would fit either in one or the other role, to some extent identifiable as "the vulnerable" and "the care giver." Despite its usefulness, the information elicited from people moving across borders at the margins of the migration architectures of the state turns the interview practice into a mechanism through which specific aspects of a person's life, mobility, and trajectory become migranticized, legitimizing a narrative that reproduces the figure of "the migrant."

The intake process at Iedereen Welkom works similarly. The information elicited aims to identify the degree of vulnerability, mental and physical health condition, and the particular characteristics of the person's trajectory. It focuses on the person's mobility across physical borders and their experiences dealing with bureaucratic procedures within the EU's migration regime. With this information, the organization (represented by its coordinator) maps out a plan to channel their guest to other NGOs providing different services, mostly for accessing healthcare, legal aid, Dutch language courses, certain forms of education, and socialization within the community. The interview works as a mechanism that helps Iedereen Welkom create a profile that besides helping to address the person's situation also helps distribute the care and

assistance work across the network of organizations. It is indeed important that such information is shared with these organizations; however, the narrative mobilizing the network emphasizes people's degree of vulnerability. In an interview, the coordinator of another organization providing housing to undocumented people commented: "in the end, the problem is that it is us, mostly Dutch people with papers, making the decisions of how people should be helped by us and the network, and which ways are better to assist people who don't get to decide on this" (Carmen, interview recording, June 2022).

During the interviews with both organizations before volunteering for them, I was never asked about my migratory status, how I had crossed borders to get there, or whether I had ever been detained or deported by an immigration authority. Moreover, I was never asked any information regarding my gender identity, ethnicity, and class, which are elements that have (and still do) determined my life and how I move across borders, matters that certainly keep shaping my trajectory. My "passings" between positions of "migrant" and "volunteer" have let me cross the boundaries dividing these categories in a seemingly fluid way. Yet, I ask myself: what makes me the migrant, the volunteer, and the researcher?

Next, we will discuss the power operating in the use of labels by the shelter organizations, concretely in the way these are used in communication and the effects they have in shaping people's reality.

5.2. Labeling and plasticity

Sheltering practices as the interviewing of newly arrived persons looking for shelter are legitimized by discourses of emergency attention, humanitarian assistance, and advocacy in the protection of people's rights. People living at Iedereen Welkom are addressed as *bewoners* (residents) by the volunteers and paid staff of the organization, mostly in their formal communications. This label is used internally in meetings and workshops, but also in different kinds of encounters with organizations in their network. Although the term "resident" stresses the fact that a person has an address and a place to live, it also relates to the state's authorization for someone to live in a country—i.e., someone holding a "residence permit." Since the use of this term is mostly left to internal communications among staff members, people addressed as such might not be directly affected by it; however, it is important to note that in the daily relation with the so-called "residents," some volunteers feel confronted by its usage, finding it contradictory and awkward to call people residents who lack the legal status of becoming a resident. Iedereen Welkom issues an ID card to each of its "residents" so they can identify themselves, mostly in case they are stopped by the police. On this study, the label *client* appears next to the person's name. Despite the usefulness of this card, preventing the escalation of an encounter with the police, the term client circumscribes the person in question to the shelter's materiality and discourse, as well as their political position in the community. This becomes relevant as the term client, often used by international and grassroots NGOs providing legal advice and access to healthcare to undocumented people, is

also related to the developmental narrative of some humanitarian NGOs aiding migrants and refugees, through schemes based on assistance and services.

At Casa para Todes, the labels "migrant," "asylum solicitant," "refugee," and "unaccompanied minor" are the most used in the communications within the organization and between this and other NGOs and state institutions. In the organization's context, these labels encompass the discourses related to the violence such people experience, having the possibility to report any crimes committed against them in Mexico with the help from the "human rights team" of the shelter. This procedure is important because it opens the possibility for someone to obtain a temporary regular migratory status recognized by the immigration authority, becoming then a "visitor for humanitarian reasons." When reporting these events to the local authorities, volunteers usually use the term "victim of a crime" to refer to the person affected by them. In Mexico, the labels "migrant" and "victim" are commonly associated with the narratives of shelter organizations. It is a fact that the lives of people moving across the country at the margins of state controls are commodified via human trafficking, extorting, and diverse forms of exploitation (Vogt, 2013); however, the continuous association of specific (im)mobile populations to those labels provokes a simplification of the structural violence causing such commodification, hence the reduction of its manifold dimensions to migration-related aspects. Such reduction is visible as well in the use of labels, e.g., in the way the word victim is used as a prefix to describe complex mobility experiences, such as "victims of trafficking," "victims of smuggling," or "victims of extorting," terms familiar to shelter organizations in Mexico. Contrastingly, it is not common to find the label "victim" in relation to the systemic/structural dynamics causing these kinds of experiences, e.g., "victims of state migration regimes," "victims of neocolonial power structures," or "victims of necropolitical policies."

The labels used in sheltering practices often have multiple meanings, and some evoke stereotypical images around victimhood and migration. Interestingly, the organizations also carefully direct specific labels to specific audiences. Labels in sheltering practice do reflect a form of *plasticity*. DeBono (2019) refers to the plasticity in the use of words related to hospitality in southern Europe. DeBono draws on the notion of "plasticity" to appoint to the impoverishment of language at processes in which terms that might have had a specialized scientific origin, are "reimported to the vernacular" (p. 344), becoming vague and ambiguous, and holding multiple meanings. These plastic words can be seen as "floating signifiers" (Laclau, 1996) as the outcome of opposing and articulating discourses in which they are embedded and the meanings contained in them become disputed by different political groups competing to "assign their desired signified" (p. 345). Some of the labels presented above—such as resident and client— contain a series of contrasting signifiers (meanings) which form a "chain of equivalences," "existing only in their differences to one another" (Laclau, 1996). At the moment in which a particular signifier dominates the others via a hegemonic process, assuming the representation of the rest, it becomes an "empty signifier" (Laclau, 1996, in DeBono, 2019). In such domination processes, certain groups gain power and hegemony through the use of specific labels, defining who can belong and who not (DeBono,

2019). As such, the label migrant can mean in particular contexts and cases that one belongs, while in a different discursive setting, it signifies non-belongingness.

In the Netherlands, for instance, the label "undocumented migrant" carries specific discursive characteristics related to a person's livelihood, such as homelessness, marginality, precarity, and vulnerability. Although people labeled as undocumented migrants many times lack a steady place to live and access to social services, and survive in precarious conditions, they might as well have paid work, attend education programs, and be active in different social groups for whom their knowledge and skills are highly appreciated. The use of labels does not always prevent someone from participating in social interactions outside the shelter, but gives place to social limitations provoked by the fixation on roles associated with labels as "undocumented migrant," "refugee," or "victim of trafficking." This issue has implications for the way people experience a sense of place-making and belonging (Winters and Reiffen, 2019) while being indeed part of society. In terms of the differentiation made of so-called migrants from so-called volunteers, the plasticity of labels might contribute to the de-politization of the first, constraining or limiting their political agency in the shelter's structure. But what happens when labels are re-signified or contested? We focus on this potential in our next section.

6. Undoing the divide? Conviviality as passing and struggle

Having presented the migrant/volunteer divide, elaborating on people's motives, the entanglement of their trajectories, the mechanisms that categorize them, and the plasticity of the labels related to it, this section presents different moments and situations in which the divide has been challenged, contested, transgressed, and even undone by the people involved in sheltering practices. From these moments, we highlight *the passings* through which these actors have crossed the seemingly hard boundaries of the divide. Although passings are not seen as absolute and persistent forms of transgression, they do remind us about the potential for alternative relational politics at play. As an entry to this discussion, we present one auto-ethnographic illustration of shifting care and hospitality relations in the Mexican context:

Vignette 5

I was bitten by an insect in my right thigh while sleeping and in 2 weeks I could not move the whole leg. Lucrecia, who arrived at the shelter with her children and husband, and who also volunteered to coordinate the kitchen area, had seen me limping for a few days. She asked me what was the problem, and after I showed her the lump that appeared in my thigh, she advised me to burst it. She claimed that this kind of insect leaves larvae that eventually eat the flesh. I was very scared and went to three different doctors in the city, but despite having started with an antibiotics treatment, my leg was still hurting and the lump was still there. So 1 day, Lucrecia insisted that if I did not open that lump and clean inside it, the injure would get worse and the consequences might be bad. I trusted her, because she said that

the same thing happened to her son and that after treating it he got better. We went to the infirmary, she laid me down on a stretcher and gave me something to bite on, then said "Cesar, hang on, it's going to hurt." Only with the help of a syringe, a piece of cotton and alcohol she burst the lump and cleaned the wound, it was very painful indeed. After that happened I went to a different doctor to treat the wound. This person asked me who had treated my leg, I explained that I worked at the shelter and that it had been a woman staying there who insisted in "curing" my wound. The doctor told me to be grateful to Lucrecia because by the shape of the wound and my previous symptoms, it seemed that the insect's venom would keep on eating the tissue (Diary notes, July 2021).

In this illustration, I was literally the one being cared for, while I was not expected to be in that position. This experience shows a clear, however temporary, *passing* of roles and divides. The vignette therewith also represents how caring can become a "floating signifier" (Laclau, 1996) in all kinds of practices and moments inside the shelter where prescribed roles somehow disappeared: moments that vary from great laughter to shared mourning. However, to understand the transformative potential of these *passings,* we should not only look at relational dynamics within the spatial confines of the shelters. The context around these locations, as well as its internal (sheltering) processes related to rules and roles, produces a notable difference between what happens inside and outside its space. In other words, much of the hard work of undoing divides takes place in convivial spaces outside the shelter locations. Some people staying at the Casa para Todes, for instance, decide at times to leave (not to mention that they would sometimes be asked to leave) and rent a room in the city. As many of them had a good relationship with some of the volunteers, they often invite them over to eat and hang out. These interactions are important exactly because it transcends the rules and conditions of sheltering practices. These are—at least in potential—the unspectacularly meaningful moments of conviviality that emerge in parallel to sheltering conditions and indeed help to undo the prescribed social positions (Valluvan, 2016). Next to shared dinners, we see this potential unfolding in theme parks, football courts, and public squares. Although we feel that these moments are at the same time filled with active reflections and evaluations that directly and indirectly reaffirm the divide, we seek to acknowledge that they simultaneously signify shared grounds and new forms of solidarity that are formed in the everyday, as expressed in literature on conviviality. To make this insightful, we turn to the case of Iedereen Welkom.

Volunteers at Iedereen Welkom are the "contact person" of someone living at the shelter. Many of them, describe their one-on-one relationships with the people they accompany as genuinely based on friendship and trust. Both actors are acquainted with diverse aspects of each other's lives, many of which happen outside the shelter. In the following statements, volunteers tell about what they find important in these relations.

Maria:

I'm reflecting a lot about my role (working) with him, because I also see him as a friend and with friends you are motivating each other and trying to help each other, but I

don't want to be his mother or his teacher, who is trying to tell him what to do, […] when I started with this internship at the Meldpunt Vreemdelingendetentie (Immigration Detention Hotline) he was also like, "ah Maria, you can handle that, because you have a lot more difficult situations to deal with in your head," so he was really concerned about my mental situation and he was really glad that this internship is over right now (Interview recording, February 2021).

Koen:

There are just some guys I really have a good connection with and I think it's always nice to come in the house and just sit down and drink some tea and have a conversation, have a laugh, […] as a volunteer you are on their level (the residents), at least I'm trying to be there. Of course they think […] about you in some hierarchical way, but I'm just drinking tea and coffee with them and talking about bullshit all day and having a laugh. And this is the most important job of all the volunteers, I would say (Interview recording, February 2021).

Throughout the interviews and small-talk moments, these and other volunteers highlighted the importance of being recognized as a friend who is cared for by the people living in the shelter. Despite being constrained by the rules of the organization, these interactions are not strictly limited to the space of the shelter, as they continue unfolding in different spaces outside it. With time, both actors normalize the idea that the shelter is not a space excluded or disconnected from the rest of the community in the city and that their relationships with the volunteers are possible outside its materiality. By detaching from the shelter's materiality, people make room to acknowledge the person behind the role of the migrant and the volunteer. These are significant *passings* and they give room for consolidating deeper relationships. It is this commonality that can give way to contesting, destabilizing, or 'rattling the cages'" of the dichotomous categorization and migranticization. Although it is difficult for both actors to fully get rid of the label/role they have been assigned through the shelter, these *passings* also point at what (Guadeloupe, 2022, p. 14) describes as conviviality: ceasing to be the totally separate other. In Guadalupe's case, this is an ethnic other, and in our case, it is the migrantizicised "other." We refer to these *passings* certainly not as an antidote to fully undo the divide, nor as a total destabilizer, but as meaningful and momentous breaks that show us that other dynamics, other worlds, are possible.

Ceasing to be the "totally" and "essentialized" other though is often partial, signifies a struggle, as there is still a sense of being subordinated to the principles of the shelter. This struggle is something Koen refers to as being on "their level," addressing the fact that both actors are subjected to the shelter's rules. When I asked Koen what were the difficulties of being a volunteer, he replied: "It was always a game between being a volunteer, applying rules and being strict, to being just myself […] it was always a clash between those two" (Interview recording, February 2021). Koen recalled a moment in which someone being sheltered asked him if he wanted to smoke marihuana with him, to which he responded: "ok, now I will switch to volunteer, then say like, no, we can't

do this, you can't do this here" (Guadeloupe, 2022). Although it was not clear if the person wanted to smoke marihuana inside the shelter or not, and despite marihuana consumption being legal in the Netherlands, Koen immediately recurred to the logic of the shelter.

When I asked the same question about difficulties in her role as a volunteer, the young woman Josje responded: "Yeah, so, not the activities but the double role you have, because for me they feel as (being) friends, but you're also a volunteer, and that makes it really hard to say: so, I like you, but we can't do this together because it would not be appropriate in a way…" (Interview recording, February 2022). She elaborated by referring to a couple of times when she was asked if she wanted to go swimming or on a date by men living in the shelter, situations in which she would have felt "more vulnerable," by exposing herself and her body to a group of men. The contrasts between Josje and Koen's experiences also tell about the role that gender plays in these interactions, something we have not addressed in this study, but which we believe should be furtherly analyzed.

Our findings indicate that people looking to shelter also look for—or struggle to find—convivial spaces to transgress the role-play of sheltering. In both settings under study, this search for new relational spaces also occurred in a broader sense. People related to the shelters co-organized with people from the community several cultural, artistic, and sport events, such as football matches, social cafés, and food and trade fairs. The intention behind these events is to facilitate moments in which all participants experience sharing, as the base for acknowledging and learning from differences and aiming to sustain stronger and more permanent processes of community building. Yet, the eventuality of these processes—as *special moments* to be advertised or *particular places* to be designed—immediately reflects their limitations in terms of conviviality (e.g., Lapina, 2016). To put it differently, the potentiality of Achiume's (2019) interconnectedness, or Gilroy's (2004) cohabitation, is easier to recognize in its straightforward form in political action. We have seen multiple moments whereby both people looking for shelter and people looking for shelter mingled and stood side-by-side. People interacting at Casa para Todes encountered as well in commemorations of International Migrants Day, the women's international struggle(s) on the 8th of March and demonstrations claiming justice for the 72 migrants found murdered in northern Mexico in 2010, also known as the San Fernando massacre. People interacting at Iedereen Welkom have encountered in demonstrations demanding a more humane asylum and migration policy, in places such as Moria, Calais, and Sarajevo, and more recently (September 2022), situating similar demands as part of a nation-wide protest sparked by the government's inaction affecting people waiting outside Ter Apel's asylum seeker center. In both the Dutch and the Mexican contexts, the people under study indeed interconnected in performing political action that demanded the end of racialized border logics that systemically stratify them, and others, in terms of their mobility rights. These are the moments where the "figure of the postcolonial migrant" is recognized as the anachronistic figure bound to the lost imperial past (Gilroy, 2004, p. 165). Even though we focused on analyzing the migrant/volunteer divide, mostly in relation to the micropolitics of sheltering practices happening inside and

outside the shelter, we acknowledge the importance of studying the potential these moments of political solidarity have in undoing it. This we leave to our readers' consideration for further research.

7. Conclusion

This study investigates the extent to which sheltering practices contribute to the (un)doing of migration—i.e., the reproduction of migration-related difference. The insights regarding the *needs* related to the shelter, the administrative procedures, and labeling practices, as well as the *passings* and continuous *struggle over convivial relations,* articulate that shelters hold very specific mobility, political, and social relations for various periods of time. It is clear that shelters are strongly embedded in the wider architecture of migration governance, including its necropolitics and the further marginalization of underprivileged travelers (Davies et al., 2017). The way in which this embeddedness figures within in the different sheltering practices and performativities, however, varies. At times, this condition is articulated and reproduced by sheltering practices, as we have seen with the intake procedure and the plasticity of labels. The ambiguity produced by such plasticity in the form of "floating signifiers" opens up room in other moments, for questioning, contestations, and destabilization through different *passings*, as we particularly discussed in the section on potential conviviality. In our view, this conviviality does not necessarily result in a total transgression of the relational logics of the shelter. It does, however, "rattle the cages" of the categories that reproduce its underlying colonial design, the normalization of difference, and corresponding logic of "othering."

With these reflections in mind, we would like to return to the question of de-migranticization as a form of knowledge production (Dahinden, 2016). The sheltering practices that we outlined are so dynamic that it is difficult to dichotomize them in terms of doing and undoing migration. Next to the use of state ingrained common-sense categories, for instance, we have come across highly creative and dynamic forms of categorization. Furthermore, the same people who perform the role of the guard or host look for conviviality in the relational politics. This is not just an argument to prevent dichotomized ideas, it rather implies that de-migranticization—as the disentangling of knowledge from presupposed and state-induced knowledge frameworks—is not only the work of academics (see also Amelina, 2022). In fact, it is part of the everyday relational struggles of shelter organizations, going beyond the relevance of discursive labels (how to call people) but entering instead the bodily emotions and social relations of people. In that sense, in terms of interconnection, there is much more to learn from the relations, conversations, knowledges, interconnectedness, and conviviality that are embedded in sheltering practices.

Publisher's note

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Aid attitudes in short- and long-term perspectives among Ukrainian migrants and Poles during the Russian war in 2022

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The aim of this article is to diagnose aid attitudes among those who potentially need help—help receivers, i. e., Ukrainian refugees—and help givers, i.e., Poles and Ukrainian labor migrants, during the initial stage of the escalation of the Russian war in 2022. By aid attitudes, we mean approaches to both the offering and the acceptance of help during the war in the short and long term. We conducted a small-scale exploratory web survey (Computer-Assisted Web Interview—computer-assisted interview using a website) from March to June 2022, in which the main aims were to explore the needs and offers for both, short- and long-term aid and the gaps between them. Respondents were asked about different types of aid without indicating from whom they wanted to receive this help: the state, NGOs or individuals offering their help. The survey results show discrepancies in what migrants need and what is offered to them in Poland, both from the short and long-term perspectives.

1. Introduction

Until the early 2000s, Poland was not a key destination for international migrants. This all changed after Poland joined the European Union (EU), which made it, together with the resulting economic development, an attractive country for labor migrants. Poland also found it necessary to open its borders to such migrants as a result of a strong demographic crisis caused by the emigration of Poles and an aging population. According to forecasts, in 2035, one in four Poles will be retired (Wieńska-Di Carlo and Klaus, 2018). That is why Poland among other EU member state offers the most liberal access to its labor market for foreigners from non-EU countries (primarily from Eastern Partnership countries, that is, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and in addition to that also Russia), who are permitted work in Poland even without any qualifications, and Ukrainian citizens, who are even permitted visa-free travel. Accordingly, at the end of February 2020, there were 2,213,594 foreigners living in Poland, of whom 1,390,978 were Ukrainian citizens (Główny Urzçd Statystyczny, 2020).

Despite its openness to labor migrants, Poland has not applied an elaborate migration and integration policy strategy and, moreover, it has not been characterized by an openness toward refugees (Głowiak, 2021). This was expressed in Poland's refusal to accept refugees from Syria, Eritrea and neighboring countries in 2015, by which it also refused to support EU member states in dealing with the consequences of the Syrian crisis, in which Russia played a large role. A similar lack of openness to refugees, along with an even greater degree hostility toward them, was displayed in the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border in Autumn 2021, caused by the actions of the Belarusian regime, with Russian support. The measures that Poland took in 2021 to repel refugees back to the Belarusian side of the border resulted in violations of the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, the EU Charter

of Fundamental Rights, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which prohibits the collective expulsion of foreigners, and provisions of the Polish Constitution itself. In addition, Poland did not take in any refugees from Ukraine in the 8 years of the war in Ukraine since its beginning in 2014. The refusal of refugee applications to Ukrainian citizens was justified by the fact that not all of Ukraine's territory was threatened by hostilities, and they could therefore find safe refuge within their own country.

The situation changed on February 24th, 2022, when the entire territory of Ukraine was attacked by Russia. This caused a refugee movement to which Poland opened its borders.

No war or armed conflict in the 21st century has yet provoked such a large migration to Poland as its main destination. As per the recent data available on the Ukraine Refugee Situation page of the United Nation's Operational Data Portal, a total of nearly 10 million border crossings from Ukraine to other countries have taken place since the February 24th. In the same period, there were nearly 3.7 million border crossings from other countries to Ukraine. Nearly half of all border crossings from Ukraine occurred on the Ukrainian-Polish border, as did nearly half of all border crossings into Ukraine.

Poland not only opened its borders but also has made a special law, that grants refugees from Ukraine access to the Polish labor market, health care and social assistance (Ustawa z dnia 12 marca, 2022). However, at this point, these state actions were not enough. The refugees needed housing, food, clothing, information and so on. Therefore, the grass-root host society of Poland has shown solidarity with the refugees and mobilized to help them.

The contrast of Poland's reaction on the Belarusian and Ukrainian borders indicates double standards. Helping and solidarity by the same activists on the Belarusian border was "criminalized," while on another it was viewed very positively. Why is there such a difference? Why is the response of Polish society and authorities so diametrically opposed to Ukraine and the Polish-Belarusian border? The main explanation is that the Russian-Ukrainian war is understandable and is a threat to Poles, so they can understand the situation of Ukrainians.

But this is not the only answer. After all, there are reports of different treatment of refugees from Ukraine, for example, of Roma origin. Roma from Ukraine constitute a particular group of refugees due to their experience of discrimination in Ukraine and subsequently in Poland. This discrimination stems from a number of deeper cultural-historical issues which are resulting in problems that non-Roma refugees from Ukraine do not encounter in most cases. These include both verbal and non-verbal acts of discrimination and/or social and cultural exclusion from resources available to refugees: housing, jobs, information, transport, material resources, and psychological, legal and educational support (Mirga-Wójtowicz et al., 2022).

This shows that another reason why Poland treats refugees from both borders differently is prejudice. It's easy for Poles to find empathy and understanding for people who are close to them culturally, religiously, or even close in terms of appearance, but more difficult toward people they do not understand, do not understand what they say, do not understand what they believe. And they look different (Chrzczonowicz, 2022).

In this crisis, the psychological capital of the refugees as well as of the host society and its resources are very important, yet of primary importance is the help that war refugees need, in relation to the capabilities of the host country and its society. This is what the authors of this paper seek to investigate.

In this article short-term is used to describe things that will last for a short time, or things that will have an effect soon rather than in the distant future. Short terms needs and help are connected with emotional help, needed immediately, refers to basic human needs (in reference to Maslow's pyramid of needs). Something that is long-term has continued for a long time or will continue for a long time in the future. Long-term needs will be required in a long perspective of time, not immediately.

The study is limited and presents which short-term and long-term assistance needs by refugees of Ukrainian nationality.

This article is an attempt to diagnose the situation and share reflections from the field. Part of the added value of this article lies in the inclusion of the perspective of a researcher with a Ukrainian background, who works at the Ukrainian House in Warsaw and is an engaged observer of the diagnosed situation. The study we propound is exploratory and could serve as a good basis for a comprehensive study on the subject.

This article consists of the following parts: information about contextual data, an indication of the theoretical approach, statement of the research question, discussion of the research methods used, description of the results of the study and the drawing of conclusions from them with an indication of areas for future research.

2. Contextual data and studies

Before we present the sample of our exploratory study, we would like to discuss the population of Ukrainian refugees in Poland in administrative statistics and in two other studies conducted at a similar time in Poland as the one conducted by the authors of this article. According to information on the registration process for the Polish National Registration System PESEL, as of 15 May 2022, the number of registered Ukrainian refugees was as high as 1.1 million, with a very specific, feminized demographic structure (see Table 1). Among the registered persons, over 47% we children and youths (people up to age 18), 42% were females of working age, and almost 7% were elderly persons (retirement age, defined as 60+ for females and 65+ for males). The largest numbers of registrations took place in the biggest Polish agglomerations in the Mazovia (20%), Silesia (10%) and Lower Silesia (10%) regions (Duszczyk and Kaczmarczyk, 2022).

In a survey conducted among refugees from Ukraine by the Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory regarding the war in Ukraine ($n = 737$) (76%) had university degrees, including master's and higher (64%). About three 52% of them material conditions. Most respondents lived in cities (91%), and most of them came from central Ukraine (46%). Forty-one percent of war refugees staying in Poland wanted to return to Ukraine as soon as the war ends, while 17% of them planned to stay in Poland permanently. Poland is the main country of migration chosen by people escaping from Ukraine. When asked about the reasons for this decision, the participants most often replied that they had family or friends in Poland (44%) or that Poland is a culturally similar country (42%). Other reasons included that it is possible to get from Ukraine to Poland rapidly (25%), and that Poland is relatively close to their home in Ukraine (24%). For some respondents, an important factor was also the aid provided to Ukrainians by Poles (20%) and the fact that Poland is a member of

TABLE 1 Demographic data of general population of war refugees from Ukraine who registered for a PESEL number in Poland.

	Number of war refugees	% of total
Children (aged 0–18)	519,567	47.35%
Working age	503,071	45.85%
Female	460,361	41.96%
Male	42,710	3.89%
Retirement age	74,579	6.80%
Female	63,878	5.82%
Male	10,701	0.98%
Total	1,097,217	100%

Source: Duszczyk and Kaczmarczyk (2022), based on the PESEL register, data as of 15 May 2022.

NATO, and they can feel safe here (15%). Only 6% of the moving to Poland before the outbreak of war in February (Długosz, 2022).

Regarding the professional situation of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, the results of a survey conducted by EWL Group ($n = 400$)[1] showed that a significant proportion of the respondents before the fled to Poland worked in the services and trade sector (27%) and in education sectors (15%). Many of the surveyed refugees were highly qualified professionals (17%). Only 9% of the respondents declared that they had a good or very good knowledge of the Polish language, and as many as four-fifths of the refugees had never worked in Poland before. At the same time, most respondents (63%) wanted to work during their stay in Poland. At the time of the survey, one in five respondents declared that they were living on their own financial resources (20%) (Raport EWL "Uchodzcy z Ukrainy w Polsce", 2022).

Despite the presence of 1.1 million war refugees from Ukraine in Poland as of October 1, only 58 Ukrainians citizens had refugee status in Poland. The reason is that Poland, with the opening of its borders to the mass migration of refugees under a special law, has provided them with a different formal-legal status (Ustawa z dnia 12 marca, 2022).

3. Theory: Aid attitudes

In order to provide aid, in addition to collective resources such as social solidarity, people also require individual resources to aid others.

Two of the most accurate concepts with regard to collective resources required for aid are social solidarity and aid attitudes. According to Durkheim (1933), social solidarity is the synergy between individuals in a society that aims for social order and stability. It underlines the interdependence and interplay between people in a society, which makes them feel that they can better the lives of others. The theory of social solidarity by Durkheim can be reflected in reducing social distance and social exclusion (cf. Mishra and Rath, 2020). Solidarity is the binding force that cements individuals based on normative obligations that facilitate

collective action and social order (Hechter, 2018). Solidarity is meant as opposite to the values of individualism, social and market competition, purely instrumental rationality and its main meanings are unselfishness and a will to act in the interest of other people (Komter, 2001, 2005). Social solidarity not only involves common responsibility for the well being of members of the community (Paskov, 2012), but also emphasizes taking care of the needs and interests of underprivileged and vulnerable people.

In response to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Focus 2030 project was created. Focus 2030 supports international development actors working to promote effective and transparent public policies to achieve equality, poverty reduction and the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The aim of the Sustainable Development Goals, a series of 17 objectives fixed by the United Nations and adopted by 193 countries, is to create the guarantee of a better life for everyone, and a basis for a more stable, environmentally friendly, and equal world by 2030. Focus 2030's aim is to help keep international development on the agenda. One of the projects realized by Focus 2030's is the Aid Attitudes Tracker, a survey conducted in France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States. Aid attitudes can be understood as opinions, behaviors and levels of individual engagement (cf. Aid Attitudes Tracker[2]). We mention this tool with high hopes of expanding the countries that could be analyzed to include Poland or Ukraine. We think it deserves attention.

Let us consider the process of aid provision from a psychological perspective. A supportive attitude consists of three components: emotional, cognitive and behavioral (Breckler, 1984). The emotional component is what one feels toward another person, the cognitive component are one's thoughts and beliefs toward another person, and the behavioral component concerns the actual acts of providing aid. Attitudes are relatively constant assessments—positive or negative— of people, objects, and concepts (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Usually, people tend to think of themselves in a positive way, as decent, competent, sympathetic and honorable (Aronson et al., 2007).

Bearing the above characteristics in mind, a person's decision to aid or not is a complex process. Latane and Darley (1970) proposed a five-step decision model of helping, during each of which people can decide to do nothing (do not help): (1) notice the event (or in a hurry and not notice), (2) interpret the situation as an emergency (or assume that as others are not acting, it is not an emergency), (3) assume responsibility (or assume that others will do this), (4) know what to do (or not have the skills necessary to help), and (5) decide to help (or worry about danger, legislation, embarrassment, etc.).

An important human resource in the helping process is Psychological Capital. Psychological Capital is constructed of four main psychological resources: self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience (cf. Newman et al., 2014) which correspond to (a) the ability to face challenges (self-efficacy); (b) having positive attitudes toward present and future success (optimism); (c) the ability to adjust one's path to success (hope), and(d) the ability to recover and move on when faced with difficulties (resilience) (Luthans, 2002).

The most important theoretical models include the reasons of pro-social behavior are: the theory of social exchange (Thibaut, 1959; Homans, 1961), the norm of reciprocity (Aronson et al., 2007), the theory of mutual altruism (Trivers, 1971) and arousal-balance

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1 The survey was carried out using direct individual interviews with the use of tablets (CAPI F2F), from March 23 to 3 April in two big cities in Poland—Warsaw and Cracow.

2 https://focus2030.org/The-Aid-Attitudes-Tracker-project

model (Piliavin et al., 1981). The theory of social exchange concerns searching for the motives of pro-social behavior in the pursuit of maximizing profits and minimizing costs. On the other hand, the norm of reciprocity is the assumption that others will treat us in the same way that we treat them. The theory of mutual altruism says that helping other members of one's own species also has benefits for the helper, as long as it is reciprocated. The theory of mutual altruism explains the phenomenon of helpfulness. Helping others increases one's resources by borrowing" from others. Thus, arousal-balance model, is about reducing or eliminating the tension that arises in a person as a result of watching someone else suffer (Piliavin et al., 1981).

After February 24th, a great "aid movement" arose in Poland. Almost every person prepared gifts—clothes, chemicals, toys and more—in order to help. The aim of our article is to try to capture both perspectives—that of people in need, and that of those who offer aid in the form of resources. Against the backdrop of the conceptual approach—an interplay of solidarity, aid attitudes and psychological capital—we formulate the following research questions:

1. Who are the people who need help, and who are people who offer it?
2. What do refugees need in the short term, and what do aid providers offer them?
3. What do refugees need in the long term, and what do aid providers offer them?

4. Methodology

Our exploratory, small-scale survey started 3 weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the February 24th 2022 and was conducted in close cooperation between the NGO Ukrainian House in Warsaw and Center for Research on Social Change and Human Mobility. The study was designed in the first weeks after the start of the war. The list of possible forms of help was designed based on current assistance activities in Poland, as well as based on individual interviews with refugees who applied for help to the Ukrainian House in Warsaw. The survey was launched on March 8th and data was collected until June of the same year. The survey measured psychological capital and forms of short-term and long-term help in two perspectives: people who offered help and the aid needs of refugees.

Data collection was carried out both on-line and on-site data at the premises of our partner NGO. We conducted the survey in three languages: Ukrainian, Polish, and English. We used a multi-channel recruitment approach, mostly through Facebook page and activities on the ground of our partner. A total of 218 people participated in the study. Most of them were women (n = 194; 89.0%) with higher education (1st, 2nd or 3rd level of education; n = 176; 80.8%). Over 65% (n = 142; 65.1%) of the respondents had children. Most (n = 168; 77.1%) had not experience migration for a period longer than 12 months before the war. More than half of the respondents had Ukrainian citizenship (n = 136; 62.4%) and were born in Ukraine (n = 133; 61.0%). The rest of the people were of Polish nationality. At the time of the study, most people were in Poland (n = 207; 96.3%).

Almost half of the respondents offered aid in connection with the war (n = 97; 44.5%); 84 people (38.5%) needed aid in connection with the war; 17 people (7.8%) both needed and offered aid (see

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics of selected qualitative variables.

Variable	Level	n	%
Perspective	I need help in connection with the war	84	38.5
	I offer aid in connection with the war	97	44.5
	None of the above	20	9.2
	Both of the above	17	7.8
Gender	Woman	194	89.0
	Man	23	10.6
Have children	Yes	142	65.1
	No	76	34.9
Citizenship	UA	136	64.8
	PL	74	35.2
Country of origin	UA	133	63.3
	PL	77	36.7

Table 2). On the other hand, 20 people described themselves as observers—they neither needed nor offered aid to refugees. The research also recorded to locations were aid was provided / received. Most of the respondents needed / offered help in Poland (n = 165; 75.7%), on the Internet (n = 41; 18.8%) and in both Poland and Ukraine (n = 37; 17.0%). Among those who need help, 82 people filled in the questionnaire in Ukrainian, two people in Polish. Among those who offer help, 64 filled in the tool in Polish and 33 in Ukrainian. Information about citizenship, country of origin or country of residence of those who need and offer help are in Table 4.

In our study, we evaluated Psychological Capital (PsyCap) using the Polish and Ukrainian translation of the Compound Psychological Capital Scale CPC-12 (Lorenz et al., 2016). This scale consists of 12 self-evaluating statements rated on a 6-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). The translation process followed the guidelines for the translation and adaptation of psychological instruments (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1998). Two persons, first fluent in English-Polish and second in English–Ukrainian, carried out parallel translations of the instrument. The inconsistencies between the independent translations were settled by a PsyCap expert.

We divided the forms of short-term and long-term aid into the following categories: material, psychological, humanitarian, organizational and professional. In total, there were 22 possible forms of needed and offered aid on the list.

5. Findings

In the first step (see Table 3), we determined who are people who need and who are people who offer help?

The people in need of help are mainly women (94.0%) who have children (71.4%). They were born in Ukraine (97.4%), have Ukrainian citizenship (99.8%), and were living in Poland at the time of the study (91.7%). The people offering aid are also mostly women (84.5%) who also have children, though to a lesser degree (61.9%), with Polish (71.4%) or Ukrainian (28.6%) citizenship, mostly born in Poland (69.8%). Almost all lived in Poland at the time of the study (97.9%).

TABLE 3 List of possible forms of needed/offered aid and help needs of refugees.

Kinds of help/aid	Category
Money	Material
Flat (place to sleep)	Humanitarian
Food	Humanitarian
Clothes	Humanitarian
Hygiene products	Humanitarian
Support from a psychologist	Psychological
Support groups	Psychological
Legal help	Organizational
Help in finding a job	Professional
Career counseling	Professional
Help in finding an apartment for rent	Organizational
Assistance in recognizing or confirming education obtained abroad	Organizational
Support in completing formalities in offices	Organizational
Technological assistance	Organizational
Symbolic help (e.g., UA flag on social media profile)	Psychological
Blood donation	Humanitarian
Volunteering (participation)	Organizational
Volunteering (aid organization)	Organizational
Helping Ukrainian soldiers	Humanitarian
Free passenger transport	Organizational
Free transport of goods	Organizational
Learning Polish	Organizational

TABLE 4 Descriptive statistics of people in need of help and people providing aid.

Variable	Level	Need help (n = 84)		Offer help (n = 97)	
		n	%	n	%
Gender	Woman	79	95.2	82	84.5
	Man	4	4.8	15	15.5
Have children	Yes	60	71.4	60	61.9
	No	24	28.6	37	38.1
Citizenship	UA	81	98.8	26	28.6
	PL	1	1.2	65	71.4
Country of birth	UA	76	97.4	29	30.2
	PL	2	2.6	67	69.8
Country of residence at the time of the survey	UA	6	7.1	1	1.0
	PL	77	91.7	95	97.9

We compared people who offered aid by gender and discovered two interesting results. First, most of the men who helped had children (n = 11; 73%) compared to women (n = 49, 59%). Secondly,

TABLE 5 Descriptive statistics of people needing help and offering aid.

	Need help		Offer help		t	df	p-Value
	M	SD	M	SD			
Hope	10.73	3.07	13.44	2.82	−6.210	179	<0.001
Self-efficacy	11.51	3.28	13.76	2.91	−4.897	179	<0.001
Resilience	11.75	3.75	13.88	3.22	−4.107	179	<0.001
Optimism	13.88	3.87	14.69	3.37	−1.505	179	n.i.
Psycho-emotional condition	3.48	1.46	4.62	1.28	−5.612	179	<0.001
Physical condition	4.33	1.39	4.60	1.41	−1.266	179	n.i.
Relationships with family	5.20	1.55	5.77	1.30	−2.698	179	0.008
Relationships with friends	5.08	1.61	5.76	1.21	−3.242	179	0.001

n.i., not important/no significant difference between groups.

mainly people without migration experience helped, although the percentage of women was lower (n = 53; 64%) than men (n = 11; 73%). Other characteristics of age, education or company size are almost the same.

We then investigated the psychological capital, psycho-physical condition and relationships with family and friends of people who need and people who provide aid. For this purpose, tests were performed for independent groups. This revealed that people offering help have a significantly higher psychological capital (except for optimism, where no statistically significant differences were observed). Their psycho-emotional condition is better, as are their relationships with family and friends (see Table 5).

In the next step, we compared what refugees from Ukraine need and what forms of short-term and long-term assistance they receive in Poland.

Our analysis of short-term aid showed that refugees most frequently declared a need for help in learning Polish, material assistance, money and help in finding a job. The most frequently offered forms of aid were money, clothes, and hygiene products. Analyzing the results in terms of the gaps or mismatches between the needs and the help offered, we see significant discrepancies. Shortages, i.e., needs exceeding the offered support, were observed for learning Polish, help in finding a job and psychological support, as most refugees had experienced trauma during the Russian invasion of Ukraine (see Table 6). In the table, the top three most needed and most offered forms of aid are indicated between parentheses after the relevant values, with the number in parentheses indicating the ranking of the needed/provided aid.

Analyzing the long-term needs for and provided aid, we again, see many discrepancies. The most common long-term needs of refugees include material help, learning Polish, career counseling and help in finding a job. Meanwhile, the help that is offered to refugees in the long term is money, food, clothing, and volunteering (see ranked forms in parentheses in Table 6). The forms of assistance subject to the greatest shortages concern learning Polish, career counseling and help in finding a job. We found the greatest

TABLE 6 Forms of short-term aid from the perspective of the needs of refugees, the aid provided by supporters, and the difference between them.

Forms of short-term help/support	Needed help [A] (n = 84)	Provided aid [B] (n = 97)	Difference [A − B]
Learning Polish	54 (1)	12	42
Help in finding a job	43 (3)	16	27
Psychological—support from a psychologist	31	12	19
Career counseling	22	5	17
Legal	19	6	13
Assistance in recognizing or confirming education obtained abroad	13	3	10
Childcare	12	2	10
Assistance in finding an apartment for rent	29	20	9
Psychological—support groups	11	4	7
Support in completing formalities in offices	15	13	2
Free transport of people	8	7	1
Free transport of goods	4	5	−1
Blood donation	1	4	−3
Technological assistance	3	7	−4
Helping Ukrainian soldiers or the Ukrainian Army	12	17	−5
Material—money	50 (2)	59 (1)	−9
Humanitarian—an apartment (a place to sleep)	12	25	−13
Voluntary work (aid organization)	2	20	−18
Humanitarian—food	24	43	−19
Humanitarian—hygiene products	19	45 (3)	−26
Symbolic help (e.g., Ukrainian flag on social media profile)	2	28	−26
Humanitarian—clothes	16	47 (2)	−31
Volunteering (participation)	11	50	−39

TABLE 7 Forms of long-term aid from the perspective of the needs of refugees, the aid provided by supporters, and the difference between them.

Forms of long-term help/support	Needed help [A] (n = 84)	Provided aid [B] (n = 97)	Difference [A − B]
Learning Polish	44 (2)	4	40
Career counseling	28	4	24
Help in finding a job	38 (3)	18	20
Assistance in recognizing or confirming education obtained abroad	17	3	14
Psychological—support from a psychologist	21	9	12
Assistance in finding an apartment for rent	24	13	11
Childcare	12	3	9
Legal	14	6	8
Psychological—support groups	12	6	6
Helping Ukrainian soldiers or the Ukrainian Army	16	11	5
Free transport of people	8	4	4
Material—money	45 (1)	45 (1)	0
Support in completing formalities in offices	15	15	0
Humanitarian—an apartment (a place to sleep)	9	12	−3
Free transport of goods	2	5	−3
Technological assistance	1	5	−4
Blood donation	2	6	−4
Humanitarian—food	20	35 (3)	−15
Humanitarian—hygiene products	17	32	−15
Voluntary work (aid organization)	2	18	−16
Humanitarian—clothes	14	32	−18
Symbolic help (e.g., UA flag on social media profile)	1	23	−22
Volunteering (participation)	10	38 (2)	−28

excesses of offered assistance in giving clothes, symbolic help (e.g., UA flag on social media profile) and volunteering (participation; see Table 7). Again, the numbers in parentheses after the values indicate the ranking of the three most needed and most offered forms of aid.

6. Conclusions and discussion

The study shows that among our respondents, the people in need of help and the people who offered aid were primarily women, most of whom had children. This follows from the fact that refugee women are primarily women with children. Considering that the people offering aid in the host society were also primarily women with children, this may be indicative of an attitude empathy and solidarity among this group.

Respondents who offered aid had higher psychological capital, which may, among other things, contribute to their willingness to help refugees. Psychological help, is an important need for refugees, many of whom have experienced war trauma. People offering aid have a significantly higher psychological capital (except for optimism, where no statistically significant differences were observed) than those who need help. Which means they have more internal resources to help others.

Our study found numerous gaps between the needed and offered short-term and long-term aid as indicated by the respondents. First and foremost, this is because initial aid attitudes were primarily driven by emotions. According to the arousal-balance model, the sight of someone else's misfortune arouses unpleasant emotional arousal in the observer, and the observer will try to defuse it in the quickest and simplest way possible (Piliavin et al., 1981). In other words, the emotional drive and desire to help overpowered the rational deliberation of what form this aid should look take and what needs it should meet. In addition, no aid management system was in place or put in place, meaning that no information was available regarding best practices for aid and what forms of aid were needed in the first place. Polish respondents have therefore primarily offered aid in the form of hygiene products, food, clothing, and money for collections. This aid was at times chaotic, excessive, and much of it ended up in trash cans (especially food). The aid provided by respondents was primarily these forms of aid, of a of ore symbolic nature, while refugee respondents primarily indicated a need for different kind of aid, namely support in stabilizing them and precarious living situation. To be more specific, refugee respondents first and foremost indicated a need for assistance relating to opportunities to support themselves and their families: assistance in finding a job and learning the Polish language. Due to the sheer size of the group of refugees and the reason for their migration, an entire cross-section of Ukrainian society resides in Poland, from ordinary workers to highly skilled professionals running their own businesses. To find their way on the Polish labor market, they need support in the form of courses, training, career counseling, recognition of education and work experience and, most importantly, learning the Polish language. The range of courses offered is still very limited and does not meet the extensive demand.

A major barrier to the state's provision of long-term support to refugees, which is proving difficult to overcome, is the structural weakness of the public service system, especially as concerns medical care and housing. The fact that access to these services is already difficult for the Polish public means that it is essentially not possible to provide real support to more than a million refugees. From the perspective of one of the authors of this article, as a leader of an NGO that aid refugees, housing remains an important need for refugees, the importance of which increases as the autumn and winter seasons approach the host society's aid fatigue grows. Poles are no longer willing to offer temporary housing in their homes, and the rental housing markets of major cities, where refugees are primarily located, are unable to respond to the high demand. The high demand in the housing market combined with fast-moving inflation is causing a continues rise in prices to a level that mothers with children to afford, considering their financial capacity, simply cannot afford.

The expression of solidarity from the Polish people that we discussed in this article is reflected in the understanding that the state was initially incapable of a rapid respondsee to the crisis. This was due to a lack of experience and an absence of strategies for migration and integration policies. Polish society and NGOs therefore stood up to take the first "blow" of the refugee influx by providing short-term assistance, thereby giving the government time to plan out the long-term support. However, the state has not taken any responsibility for assistance and integration upon itself. As a result, the mismatch between the needed and provided aid from the long-term perspective causes adverse reactions in society, resulting in a reluctance to provide aid due to the perceived ungratefulness

on the part of refugees. Furthermore, there is a widespread lack of knowledge about best practices for aid provision. The lack of real long-term support is causing some of refugees, having exhausted their financial resources, to seek help in other European countries or return home, where they remain in danger.

The results of this study indicates that there is a need to study psychological capital among people who offer aid and need help. This will help to understand the importance of the psychological capital of refugees and the host society in dealing with the present crisis. The identified problems require further thorough research to investigate, on a larger sample of respondents, the matching of needs and assistance. Such a follow-up study could be enriched with the perspective of NGO staff working on behalf of migrants and refugees, as well as state and local government employees. The results of such a study could be the basis for recommendations to various actors as to how the situation may be improved.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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