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Introduction: Humanizing Studies of Refuge and Displacement?

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Dehumanizing politics and sentiments towards refugees and other migrants are noxious and widespread today. The rise of nativist, right-wing, and anti-asylum populism in Europe and its settler colonial extensions in North America and the Pacific are escalating an existing system of racialized inequality, dispossession, and differential mobility that has grown out of histories of empire and a militarized liberal world order built on racial capitalism. Invocations of animal and natural disaster metaphors thus denigrate life-seeking people on the move as "swarms," "waves," and "floods" (Burrell & Hörschelmann, 2019; Holmes & Castañeda, 2016). Together with xenophobic tropes of "foreign" invasion, these discourses suffuse everyday politics within and beyond the Global North. Some migrants are literally placed in disused zoos or zoo-like spaces, constructing them not only discursively as "animalized subjects" in the colonial present but illustrating their thinly veiled treatment **as** animals (Vaughan-Williams, 2015). Meanwhile, neighbourhoods, nation-states, and communities are imagined in neo-Malthusian terms to be demographically and culturally under siege by those constructed as "not-quite-human" or simply "non-human" (Mamadouh, 2012; Weheliye, 2014; Wynter, 2003). This racialized figure of the non-human is not merely the result of colonial invention but has been produced through a wilful process of "ontological destruction" (Sithole, 2020, p. 63). Born out of white supremacist logics and their colonial infrastructures, the declarative violence of universalizing assumptions of what it means to be "human" continues to reverberate not just in mainstream public discourses on global migration but also, less overtly, within scholarship and research spaces.

As critical scholars of refuge, migration, and displacement, we are cognizant of these racialized geographies of "humanness" and the challenges they pose for us as researchers, educators, and fellow life-seekers. Material injustices, representations, and spatial imaginaries hereby always intersect with the institutional management of refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced pop-

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ulations (Mains et al., 2013; Mayblin, 2017; Pasquetti & Sanyal, 2020). These entanglements sensitively shape political possibilities for social justice, inclusion, and liberation, as well as our own intellectual responses and subjectivities. Indeed, the process of researching displacement(s) is mired in unresolved ethical dilemmas. We must interrogate our interactions with diverse groups of border crossers and other people on the move, our proximity to state authorities and aid organizations, as well as our understanding of who a collective "we" includes. Systems of marginalization and dehumanization are not just **external** objects for academic inquiry but are woven into the very ways in which we conceive, plan, conduct, experience, write, and present studies on displacements and (im)mobility. Far from producing disembodied, unlocatable, or even posthuman knowledges, "we consistently speak from a **location** [emphasis added] in the gender, racial, class and sexual hierarchies of the world-system" (Grosfoguel et al., 2015, p. 646).

This forum of **Refuge** offers interventions around the theme Humanizing Studies of Refuge and Displacement? as a theoretical and methodological debate for critical refugee and forced migration scholarship. However, rather than proposing a conclusive path towards humanization—which encompasses complex processes of (re)building, (re)constructing, and (re)thinking "the human," humanity, and social relations—our aim is more modest, tentative, and reflexive. Our starting point was a workshop co-organized by the authors and Patricia Daley at the University of Oxford in November 2018. The workshop brought together an interdisciplinary set of scholars to reflect collectively on dehumanizing tendencies in the ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies underpinning scholarship on refugees today, and to think through, beyond, and against them.

Taking this event as an entry, we use **humanization** as a heuristic to accommodate multiple contradictory versions of what more emancipatory scholarship might entail. We are not only concerned with tracing, traversing, and pondering over our positionalities and epistemic complicities, or charting "the border between theory and activism" (Lafazani, 2012; Torres, 2018). Instead, we actively seek to practise and advance a radical scholarship that is grounded in political solidarity for social and racial justice. To do so means grappling with, and situating ourselves and our scholarly institutions within, abiding structures of violence and erasure that are—sometimes slowly, sometimes more spectacularly—perpetrating the very ontological destruction of people on the move that we are desperately trying to combat. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1993) famously observed that a "concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as a historical reality" (p. 17). Likewise, for Okechukwu Ibeanu (1990), who examined the causes of racialized displacement within capitalism, resolving forced migration requires radical political change:

> Indeed, until the dominant interests in the world become those that guarantee justice, equity and freedom, not only in legal and political life, but in the totality of human existence, resolving the crisis of refugees and other displaced populations will remain a fleeting illusion.
>
> *p. 60*

It is therefore our aim to advance critical debates in refugee and (forced) migration studies that recentre "the human" and wider human experiences beyond the individualizing tropes of neoliberal subjectivity that too often conceive of the migrant, the refugee,

or the asylum seeker as a stand-in for the supposedly redeeming qualities of Western capitalist modernity. Formulating the title of this forum as a question allows us to express the inherent fragility, uncertainty, and polysemy of this ambition while gesturing towards the unanswered queries arising from it. How do migrants fit within racialized structures of oppression and historically produced hierarchies of humanity? How may the act of writing on and about refugees and migrants inscribe or deny worth? How do "the human," humanism, humanitarianism, and posthumanism intersect? What role can activist scholarship play in humanizing struggles? What is our relationship to human-centred projects of humanitarianism? How do we begin to recover, reconstruct, or make sense of the human in contexts of displacement? And, finally, is humanizing at all viable or desirable, or do we need to fundamentally rethink what research can achieve?

Although this forum cannot and perhaps should not offer authoritative answers to these questions, we hope it can provide a space for generative conversations.

DEHUMANIZATION: MIGRATION AND RACIALIZED HIERARCHIES OF HUMANITY

Delivering the keynote for the workshop from which this forum emerged, Behrouz Boochani, himself in a prison camp on Manus Island at the time, vividly described the intimate and daily denigrations of the identities, physical health, and psychological states of people imprisoned in camps in Papua New Guinea and the Republic of Nauru for seeking refuge in Australia (Boochani, 2018a). "The aim," he stated, "is to torture people to the point where the person gives up" (14:05). The psychological burden of this oppressive system "causes a great deal of agony in the soul and mind of every human being" (17:20), humiliating those seeking refuge in "fundamentally and intimately inhuman ways" (9:37). This system, he theorizes, "is colonialism" (01:40). For Boochani (2018a) , it "is established on colonial-concept thinking and practices" and the hierarchical valuation of humans in Kyriarchal systems of domination and exclusion (01:30; see also Boochani, 2018).

Such connections between colonial logic, dehumanization, and exclusion are not new. Frantz Fanon highlighted the "colonial vocabulary" and logic that "dehumanizes the colonized subject," including still strikingly familiar statements that "hordes will soon invade our shores" (2004, pp. 7–8). For Fanon, dehumanization is justifying the spatial, racialized division of the colonial world and the violence maintaining it. It continues to produce—and be reproduced through—the violence directed towards those forced to seek refuge in a world whose topographies are still shaped by empire. Yet, despite unrelentingly dehumanizing systems of domination, migrants (like the colonized) know they **are** human. Throughout Boochani's writing, he refers to those with whom he is imprisoned as humans, human beings—resisting dehumanization in this reiterative vocabulary (Boochani, 2018b). Fanon emphasizes that this defiant recognition of one's own humanity is in fact the kernel of resistance: an emancipatory humanization (2004, p. 8).

The racist colonial and imperial geographies underlying displacement and responses to it are meanwhile often erased in studies on contemporary humanitarian governance and migration management (Brankamp, 2019; Daley, 2007; Danewid, 2017; Davies and Isakjee, 2018; Pasquetti & Sanyal, 2020). Following Kyriakides et al. (2019, pp. 4–5), "'race[,]' [which] had the effect of dehumanizing and objectifying

people as less deserving of treatment as the human bearers of civilization," is not a mere "variable" in refugee research but forms "part of an embedded structure of oppression in which the racialized refugee regime is generated and reproduced" (Daley, 2007). In this way, the assumed humanism of human(itarian)ism is undermined by its enduring colonial infrastructures. As Tendayi Sithole boldly proclaims, "there cannot be humanism in the colonial condition. This condition is nothing but dehumanization" (2020, p. 75). The same may ring true of institutionalized humanitarianism and possibly even academic aims to "humanize" refugee research, no matter how well intended.

THE TROUBLE WITH "REFUGEE RESEARCH"

Migration and mobilities have become key themes in the social sciences in recent decades, including a subfield of research on asylum seekers and refugees, generating interdisciplinary resonance across disciplines such as geography, anthropology, sociology, political science, history, and law. The latest surge in studies interested in people on the move has arguably been a corollary of Europe's "long summer of migration" (Kasparek & Speer, 2015), even though forced displacement has affected millions of people in formerly colonized societies of the Global South for decades prior. From the inception of this field of study, scholars have often assumed dual roles as academics **and** advocates, writers **and** activists, who critically reflected on and analyzed the institutional imposition of aid (Harrell-Bond, 1986), the role of capitalism, class struggle and white supremacy (Ibeanu, 1990), imbalances in knowledge production on refugees (Chimni, 1998), denials of agency and voice to displaced people (Malkki, 1995), and the global politics of containment (Hyndman, 2000).

While critical refugee scholarship has never subsided, it has gradually been eclipsed by politically more expedient strands of research aligned with powerful actors on a global stage. Today, some of the most publicly acknowledged (and celebrated) refugee research advocates liberal economic empowerment, entrepreneurialism, and market-based solutions to conditions of displacement, social exclusion, and precarious citizenship. Refugee agency, self-reliance, resilience, and self-determination are thereby framed as countering the more immediately harmful representations of refugees as helpless "victims," security threats, or dependent subjects of aid. Nevertheless, this once again constructs a narrow version of the "ideal refugee" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014), which masks the perennial spatial and political exclusion of refugees from host societies, citizenship regimes, and substantial rights through a deceptive process of "liberal violence" (Isakjee et al., 2020).

Further, the market orientation of refugee policy comes at a time when humanitarian organizations—above all, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)—are forging closer partnerships with international financial institutions such as the World Bank, private businesses, foundations, and corporate investors as institutionalized in the global compacts on refugees and for migration (UN, 2018a, 2018b), as well as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) (UN, 2018c). The legitimacy of these questionable relationships seems unaffected by the continuing erosion of refugee rights in many host states and the planetary immobilization aims that often underlie the promotion of "self-reliance" policies (Hyndman & Reynolds, 2020). On the contrary, we argue that the seemingly depoliticized, technocratic logics engrained in "migration man-

agement," aid discourses that responsibilize individuals, empowerment rhetoric, and decreases in public funding continue to play into the dehumanization of displaced communities globally while failing to confront its systemic underpinnings in capitalism, imperialism, coloniality, racism, xenophobia, and denial of citizenship rights.

HUMANIZATION: TOWARDS (RE)CONSTRUCTING "THE HUMAN"

It is now a commonplace observation that disciplinary refugee and forced migration research is deeply implicated in producing—and is structurally privileged by—the unequal geographies of knowledge production between the Global North and the Global South (Chimni, 1998; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020; Grosfoguel et al., 2015; Kosnick, 2021; Pasquetti & Sanyal, 2020). Processes of dehumanization are therefore not only objects of analysis or inquiry but are imbricated in the epistemologies, methodologies, and subject positions that underpin our collective intellectual endeavours. This forces us to seriously reckon with our own fragmented **humanness**, including the differential positions we inhabit within intersecting global orders of race, class, gender, ability, and geographical location. Thus, universalizing conceptions of "humanity" and "Man" are, as Walter Mignolo rightfully argues, merely "a narrativization that has been produced with the very instruments (or categories) that we study **with**" (2015, p. 107). Far from a natural ontological category, humanity itself is a product of the same socio-historical forces that entrench unequal geographies of knowledge production. Attempts towards humanization have therefore emerged against the background of coloniality and a global racial order in which a Black and Brown majority has been excluded from humanity and relegated to what Fanon termed a "zone of non-being" (2008, p. 2). Humanization then risks, at worst, reproducing this "epistemic totality" that is hidden behind a false egalitarian notion of communion (Mignolo (2015) , 2015, p. 109). As a result, we consciously do not propose a singular path towards achieving humanization, not least as such a prescription is bound to fail while inevitably creating new exclusions, hierarchies, and closures.

We draw inspiration from scholars in post-colonial, decolonial, and Black studies who fight against the dehumanization brought about by colonization, slavery, racial capitalism, and ongoing dispossession to frame our struggles towards (re)assembling, (re)thinking, and (re)making **the human** in all of its diversity (Gilroy, 2016; Mckittrick, 2015; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Sithole, 2020; Weheliye, 2014; Wynter, 2003). Any ambition of humanization must therefore come with a caution: it is necessarily a partial and unfinished project—a series of openings rather than a definitive closure. Sylvia Wynter has worked against universalized narrativizations of the figure of "Man" as the stand-in for the totality of human lives and their experiences. Critiquing the imperial figure of Man-as-human, created during the European Enlightenment, Wynter's work aspires to recover and hereby better understand "the grounds of human being" (Wynter & Scott, 2000). In a sense, this follows Césaire (1972) noted aphorism postulating his ambition to forge a reformed "humanism made to the measure of the world" (p. 73). Césaire and Wynter are not advancing a posthumanist project but instead a generative anti-humanism that builds, recovers, heals, and rewrites, rather than seeking to superficially overcome, "the human" (Zimitri, 2020).

Articulating a different reconstructive work, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) draws on Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (2009) notion of "re-membering" as an embodied decolonial act to undo the colonial violence of dispersal and erasure of knowledge in human life. For Ngũgĩ, colonial dispossession induced a process of "dismembering"—at once territorial, communal, epistemic, and corporeal—which necessitates a restorative counter-initiative and a "quest for wholeness" (wa Thiong'o, 2009). Against Europe's imperial project of a "false" humanism, Gobodo-Madikizela (2002) proposes what she calls an alternative "reparative humanism" for the eventual restoration of injured, alienated humanity in the wake of colonial trauma (Gilroy, 2016, p. 112). Gobodo-Madikizela's (2002) reparative form of humanism is premised on a dual process of colonial survivors counteracting the indignity of racism and domination by issuing (conditional) forgiveness and empathy, while perpetrators of colonial violence may also (re)acquire their own humanity by acts of truth-telling or demonstrating remorse. Sithole (2020) envisions a less conciliary future of social justice in which the ontological destruction of the colonized subject is systematically undone by redefining the dehumanizing condition of anti-Blackness through the "Black register": a way of acting and thinking in which Blackness rewrites both the definition of humanness and, with it, the world. In essence, it is "the ethical operation of blackness liberating itself in its own name" (p. 6).

HUMANIZING POSSIBILITIES IN STUDIES ON DISPLACEMENT

What can studies on refuge and displacement learn from these multiple, incomplete, and diverging avenues for humanization and the remaking of human(e) relations? Despite its colonial disciplinarity, and the overt inequalities of the academic-industrial complex, research on forced migration is not inevitably aligned with institutionalized power. Indeed, a prominent activist tradition exists in refugee scholarship—not least personified by the late Barbara Harrell-Bond—which always defended the rights of displaced people against the violence of states or aid organizations. Politically engaged scholars have expended considerable energy to challenge dehumanizing research practices, policies, and language (Conlon & Gill, 2015; Daley, 021a; Hyndman & Mountz, 2007; Oliver et al., 2019). Therefore, we use the term **humanizing** not uncritically but as a shorthand for the diverse, radical challenges to all sources of dehumanizing politics and scholarship. Working in exceptional spaces and encounters laden with asymmetrical power relations, we are especially attentive to ethical and methodological concerns (Maillet et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Parvati, 2016). We both draw upon and contribute to the already rich contemplation of ethics and methods in complex research contexts of bordering, "crisis," care, and control by recentring the principle aims of an emancipatory humanization (Fanon, 2004; Gomes, 2017; Mckittrick, 2015).

Crucially, refugees, migrants, and displaced communities have been active protestors and organizers themselves (Bhimji, 2016; Lecadet, 2016; Rygiel, 2011). Increasingly, refugees and forced migrants also feature prominently as writers, poets, artists, scholars, and knowledge producers whose experiences of displacement shed critical light on the hegemonic forms of studying asylum, borders, and mobilities (Boochani, 2018b; Khosravi, 2010; Qasmiyeh, 2021). Radical refugee scholars have sometimes

built networks of collective knowledge production or sharing, a prime example of which is Critical Refugee Studies.[1] Mirroring Wynter's generative anti-humanism, these key interventions have advocated for imbuing the received category of "the refugee" with "social and political critiques that critically call into question the relationship between war, race, and violence, then and now" (Espiritu, 2006, p. 411).

Forced migration is a troubled political terrain on which the nature of human social relations, actions, and sociality is perpetually questioned. We understand the conditions of exile and displacement as "an existential, phenomenological, ethical, and ultimately, human experience" (Oliver et al., 2019, p. 1) that requires permanent critical theorizing. Whether these seemingly divergent struggles (outlined above) towards unsettling and reimagining of "the human" will eventually herald what Daley calls "a planetary humanity consensus" (2021b, p. 366)—which can tackle the impending political, socioeconomic, and ecological disasters—remains to be seen. As much as this forum seeks to energize an open-ended agenda of humanizing research on forced migration, it simultaneously questions the possibility and desirability of doing so. Asking what **humanizing** may mean is not a teleological task but requires an ongoing conversation about subjectivities, representations, resources, and collective research futures that we wish to advance.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributors to this forum variously examine the un/desirability and im/possibility of "humanizing" studies of refuge and displacement. All of the interventions that follow address underlying epistemological and methodological approaches in refugee studies as central to addressing dehumanization in research.

As **Patricia Daley** argues in the opening piece, the framing of ethics in forced migration studies has been overly reductive. The precept of **do no harm** should extend beyond mitigating immediate risks to participants and apply also to the design, questions, and philosophical underpinnings of research as these may contribute to the (re)production of violence, not least towards racialized and marginalized people. The two subsequent interventions each critique one such framework. **Yolanda Weima** addresses supposedly pro-asylum narratives about refugees as "resources" for host states. Instead of humanizing refugees, the language of resources reinforces a human/non- human distinction that defines commodities and their value within global capitalism, thus objectifying displaced populations. An even more ubiquitous theoretical point of departure in Western mainstream refugee studies is Giorgio Agamben's figure of "bare life." **Hashem Abushama** critiques Agamben using the work of Black theorist Alexander Weheliye. Thinking from the space of the Palestinian refugee camp, he finds Weheliye's emphasis on "the flesh" a more incisive terrain on which the global racial order of modernity is imprinted and from which it can be challenged and unthought.

Two further interventions examine the intertwining of methodology and practicalities of "doing" and designing research. **Estella Carpi** argues that attempts at humanization are conditional on our willingness as scholars to be self-critical of problematic interactions with "the field." This requires a proactive stance against "research hot spots,"

[1] 1 See the Critical Refugee Studies Collective website: http://www.criticalrefugeestudies.com/.

which put needless pressure on the communities in question and risks circularity of knowledge. A relational view of the experiences of citizens and non-citizens fends against compartmentalized refugee research framings. **Hanno Brankamp** draws attention to how research can also be unduly shaped through attempts to "bridge" gaps between academic scholarship and the world of humanitarian policy-makers and practitioners. He argues that it is necessary to demarcate research committed to anti-violence and social justice against the "humanitarian embrace" of institutionalized aid. Resonating with Carpi's call for reflexivity and relationality, he proposes slow, insurgent, and politically engaged research methodologies, emphasizing solidarity with encamped and displaced migrants.

The final two contributions cast a critical light on our own attempts at humanization. **Jonathan Darling** questions whether, in aiming to "humanize" migrants, refugee studies can ultimately resist reproducing normative accounts of "the human." Indeed, folding different life experiences and positionalities into any singularity risks eclipsing alternative ways in which "the human" has been historically, politically, and racially constructed. Finally, **Oliver Bakewell** contends that social scientific research is in itself a dehumanizing project because it reduces variegated human experiences to labels, categories, and analytical models. In contrast to the other contributors, Bakewell hereby asks whether a more realistic ambition towards effecting positive change for the lives of displaced populations would be to "dehumanize differently" by recognizing the inevitable shortcomings and dehumanizing tendencies of social research.

Collectively, the interventions in this forum urge us to engage reflexively in struggles to undo persistent indignity, marginalization, and violence towards refugees, as well as to people affected by both displacement and involuntary immobilities beyond this category. While the contributors at times disagree on the precise strategies, political alliances, and discourses necessary for this endeavour—including the utility of the language of humanization itself—we are united in our conviction that studies of refuge and displacement must seek to improve the lives of (displaced) migrants. However, this long-held "imperative" of refugee studies (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003) can no longer be simply viewed as a marriage of academic and policy relevance. Radical change can only be sought through political solidarity and protest, as well as substantive critiques of global capitalism, epistemic violence, structural exclusion, and racialized control.

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Ethical Considerations for Humanizing Refugee Research Trajectories

Patricia Daley

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that ethical responsibilities in refugee studies have focused on fieldwork, yet ethics ought to be applied to the research problematic—the aims, questions, and concepts—as potentially implicated in the production of harm. Using an example from Tanzania, I argue that policy has largely shaped the language, categories investigated, and interpretive frames of refugee research, and this article advocates greater attention to historical and contemporary racialization processes underpinning humanitarian principles and practices, and how they might contribute to exclusion and ontological anxieties among refugees in the Global South. By expanding our conceptualization of ethical responsibilities, researchers can better explore the suitability, and the implications for the refugee communities, of the approach that they have adopted and whether they contribute or challenge the racialization and dehumanization of people seeking refuge.

KEYWORDS

refugee; forced migration; ethics; field work; Tanzania

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article soutient que les responsabilités éthiques dans les études sur les réfugiés se sont concentrées sur le terrain de recherche alors que l'éthique devrait également s'appliquer à la problématique de recherche - les objectifs, les questions et les concepts pouvant potentiellement causer préjudice. À partir d'un exemple issu de la Tanzanie, cet article soutient que les politiques publiques ont largement façonné le langage, les catégories étudiées ainsi que les cadres interprétatifs de la recherche sur les réfugiés, et préconise de porter une plus grande attention aux processus de racialisation historiques et contemporains qui sous-tendent les principes et pratiques humanitaires, ainsi qu'à la manière dont ils peuvent contribuer à l'exclusion et aux anxiétés ontologiques chez les réfugiés du Sud global. En élargissant la conceptualisation des responsabilités éthiques, les chercheurs sont mieux à même d'explorer la pertinence et les implications de l'approche qu'ils ont adoptée pour les communautés de réfugiés, et dans quelle mesure ils contribuent à la racialisation et la déshumanisation des personnes cherchant refuge ou la remettent en cause.

KEYWORDS

refugee; forced migration; ethics; field work; Tanzania

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INTRODUCTION

Emmanuel is 35 years old[1] . He gained Tanzanian citizenship in 2009 when approximately 162,000 Burundian refugees were allowed to apply for Tanzanian nationality. He was born in a Tanzanian refugee settlement to parents who fled the 1972 genocide in Burundi. He is considered one of the leaders of the Burundi community in Dar es Salaam. Unlike other former Burundian refugee who are actively hiding their identity (Daley et al., 2018), Emmanuel and his friends are seeking to reimagine a new one that emphasizes their experiences in Tanzania and draws from aspects of Burundian culture that are considered positive. He comments, "Why should we abandon our food and language, and our approach to gender relations which is much more progressive than Tanzanians. … Tanzania has so many ethnic identities, we could rename our ethnic group 'Higwe"'—a Kirundi term meaning "lucky people." He believes ethnic reclassification will address the stigma and discrimination they face as "refugees," Hutus, and Burundians, which constitute problematic categories of being in Tanzania. A frequent complaint from these former refugees is that Tanzanians fear them (Daley et al., 2018). This echoes research by Run (2012, p. 384) and others of media representation of refugees in Australia, where they are "portrayed as personifying the violence that ousted them from home and bestowed them by the label" of **refugees** (p. 384). In reality, as Run (2012, p. 386) contends, "from the time of fleeing home well through most of their life experiences, [refugees] consistently feel threatened"—a condition that produces, following Anthony Giddens (1991, p. 36–37), "existential anxiety" or "cognitive and emotional disorientations," thus preventing the attainment of "ontological security"—because their biographical histories fail to provide certainties and a sense of belonging (Daley et al., 2018).

Many former Burundian refugees, residing within and outside of the settlements, expressed the same sentiments, and there is historical evidence of refugees in North America and Europe, for example, Jewish refugees from Central Europe to the United States, changing names and abandoning their culture for a variety of reasons, including to avoid stigma and gain employment (Maass, 1958; Moriel, 2005). In post-colonial Tanzania, from the 1960s to the 1980s, supporting refugees was believed to be a moral and political responsibility of states and host societies (Chaulia, 2003). Based on research conducted in the mid-1980s, Liisa Malkki (1995) argues that refugees in encampments hung onto the refugee label to differentiate themselves from Tanzanians, while refugees settled in townships pursued strategies of assimilation. A study by the Centre for Forced Migration (CFM) et al. (2008, p. 16) notes that four decades later, "refugees were frustrated with the [refugee] label" and that it "[left] them feeling marginalised and excluded from mainstream Tanzanian society and create[d] a real challenge" for initiatives aimed at integrating those who chose to remain in Tanzania. The study also found that former refugees were still confronted with fear and loathing, that those, such as Emmanuel, who once held the label were seeking new ways of identification to facilitate integration into

[1]The name Emmanuel is a pseudonym. The qualitative data used in this paper was obtained in 2016–2017 for a research project entitled Becoming Tanzanian: Former Burundi Refugees and the Forging of Citizenship in Tanzania, which was funded by the University of Oxford. Ethics clearance was obtained from Oxford University's ethics committee. In Tanzania, the research was supported by Dr. Ng'wanza Kamata and Leiyo Singo of the University of Dar es Salaam. Some of this research was previously published in Daley et al. (2018). The first part of this article draws and expands on insights first discussed there.

the political community of Tanzania and to regain their everyday humanity.

This state of affairs can be attributed to the anti-immigration and anti-refugee discourse produced by some Tanzanian politicians (see, e.g., Siyame, 2017). However, research pursued by academics and other institutions such as think tanks also ought to come under scrutiny. Commonly, the discourse of non-academic protagonists tends to be interrogated as to whether it inspires incitement to hatred and violence or othering, but that of the academic receives less attention. Crawley and Skleparis (2018) alert us to the problematic relationship between policy and academic research in the context of Europe. They comment:

> Taking the dominant categories as the basis of our analytical approach can limit our understanding of migration and make us potentially complicit in a political process which has, over recent years, stigmatised, vilified and undermined the rights of refugees and migrants.
>
> *p.50*

Bakewell (2008, p. 433), noting the limitations of policy categories in migration research, similarly argues that they tend to "obscure and render invisible some population groups, causal relationships, and questions that are methodologically difficult to capture." Using the example of the intersection of policy and academic research in Tanzania, my contention builds on and goes beyond these authors' conclusions by suggesting that researchers' uncritical use of these policy categories can be implicated in the production of harm.

Ethical responsibility in forced migration research, though advanced significantly over the past two decades (Clark-Kazak, 2017; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003; Krause, 2017), nevertheless has tended to focus on fieldwork practices: anonymity, informed consent, security, and appropriate methodologies, all aimed at doing no harm (Muller-Funk, 2021; Espinoza, 2020). Yet, such scrutiny often does not apply to the research problematic—the theories, aims, questions, and terminologies—as potentially implicated in the production of harm. Krause (2017, p. 19) alerts researchers to the danger of "reproducing victimising notions of refugees and therewith contributing to concepts of vulnerabilities which the international refugee regime uses." Since their arrival in 1972, Burundian refugees in Tanzania have been an example of a group subjected to a plethora of academic and policy-based research (Lemarchand, 1996; Malkki, 1995; Sommers, 2001).

Such research uncritically deploys concepts that have utility globally, often without understanding how they might resonate locally. Malkki's (1995) study of the 1972 Burundian refugees in Tanzania led to some insightful theoretical observations on the antagonistic relationship between refugee identity and the nation-state and the discursive construction of the refugee as "a special kind of person" (p. 9), "a victim" (p. 12); yet, as noted in Daley et al. (2018), Malkki (1995) also depicted the Hutu, who were victims of genocide, as possessing an atavistic form of ethnic hatred of the Tutsi perpetrators. She claims that camp refugees promoted a unified Hutu identity that drew on a "mythico-history" based on experiences of social injustices and violence against the group (1995, p. 55). It is not clear whether her findings were disproportionately influenced by the Hutu political elites in the Mishamo camp. However, and inadvertently, Malkki's (1995 representations of Hutus ("trapped within '… bloodstained categories' and 'categorical hatred"' [1995, p. 297]) may have influenced policy-makers and their academic consultants. This perception of violent Hutus

was reinforced by the 1994 Rwandan genocide where the Hutus were the perpetrators (Turner, 2010), which Malkki (1995) discusses in her concluding chapter.

Research that addresses the persistence of ethnic hatred in a national context, such as Tanzania, where ethnicity as a factor in the post-colonial state had been downplayed in order to promote national unity (Campbell, 1999), can sow seeds of suspicion and end up germinating hostility. This becomes even more potent in a context where the economic and political anxieties of the neoliberal era have emphasized axes of difference that can be utilized for elite mobilization. Therefore, by retelling the narratives of violence, work such as Malkki's (1995), for example, may have inadvertently helped to legitimate Tanzanian suspicions about refugees of Hutu ethnicity, with government officials expressing distrust of the refugees' motives and desires (Daley et al., 2018). As one local academic policy adviser, who was exhibiting a degree of hostility towards the new citizens, stated when we interviewed her: "They [Burundian refugees] are not really interested in staying. Did Malkki not say they want to return and overthrow the Burundi government?" (Daley et al., 2018, p. 28). While this represents a simplistic interpretation of Malkki's more nuanced analysis, her retelling of the violent narratives prevalent among 1980s' Hutus in camps may have informed the negative perception of all Hutus in and out of camps transmitted to second- and third-generation refugees, and contributed to how some Tanzanian scholars and bureaucrats approach the integration and the realization of the sense of belonging that the new citizens seek (CFM, 2008). This is important in that a context where colonial assumptions about identity as unchanging persist. In mitigation, second- and third-generation Hutus outside of the refugee settlements, cognizant of the perception that they embody violent histories, continue to devise ways of "passing" by hiding their individual biographies or trying to officially change the name of their ethnic group (Daley et al., 2018).

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

When I first started doing research on refugees in the 1980s, refugee research was largely focused on advocacy directed at improving the situation of refugees—how to ensure that people escaping persecution and violence could find safety and sanctuary away from home, and how to resolve the conflicts that led to flight. Since then, and as the academic discipline of refugee studies has grown, mainstream research has provided routes to career opportunities, whether in the university and international humanitarian organizations, and/or as lucrative consultants, and conforms increasingly to policy imperatives aimed at control and exclusion with dehumanizing consequences. To the extent now that the most vulnerable people on the planet are en route to being treated as a pool of labour by international capital, academics style them as "entrepreneurs" or as captive labour to be appropriated in similar ways as in Global North corrective facilities (Heilbrunn & Iannone, 2020).

Ethical responsibilities necessitate an investigation of the ways in which the language academics use, the labels and categories they investigate, and the assumptions they draw have contributed to the continued externalization of people fleeing violence as a category outside of common referents (Malkki, 1995) and the production of a discourse that sanctions objectification and potential exploitation. In seeking to influence policy-makers, scholars tend to replicate the policy language in their interpre-

tive frames: **durable solutions**, **repatriation**, **integration**, **assimilation**, **self-reliance**, and **internally displaced peoples** have become normative concepts for obscuring the structural factors behind flight and individualizing the ontological anxieties of asylum and refugee trajectories. Ethical humanizing research requires new definitional terminologies and frames of analysis.

Labelling, naming, and categorizing things and people have been central to colonial acquisition, demonstration, and maintenance of power. Colonial narratives of innate racial or tribal characteristics continue to inform popular assumptions about group behaviour, even in post-colonial Tanzania, where ethnic differences are rarely articulated (Daley et al., 2018). **Refugee**, as a bureaucratic category as defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, was another external label imported in the late 1950s to fit the nation-state concept being adopted by emerging post-colonial states and marking the distinction between insiders (citizens) and outsiders (refugees/immigrants) (Rosenthal, 2015). Malkki (1995) argues that in the Tanzanian camp, refugee identity was embraced by the refugees to distinguish themselves from citizens, almost as an act of defiance. But as Rosenthal (2015) has shown, the label also enabled the post-colonial Tanzania state to consolidate its territorial identity and the humanitarian regime to differentiate aid beneficiaries from the local population. As he further argues, the term refugee was, over time, used more widely across Tanzania and became associated with threats—security (implying innate propensity for violence) and demographic (outnumbering citizens in the sparsely populated areas in which they were settled).

Roger Zetter (1991) questions the functions of the bureaucratic label of the refugee. He sees labelling as "more than a taxonomic problem because, far from clarifying an identity, the label conveys, instead, an extremely complex set of values, and judgements which are more than just definitional" (p. 40). Zetter revisited the issue of labelling in 2007 and argued that it was driven by the Global North and by different interests, particularly states opposed to migrants and refugees. Crawley & Skleparis (2018) discuss the persistent use of these northern-derived categories that have meanings that vary over time and are linked to distinct policy measures promoted to and within southern states, which, increasingly, are rebounded back to the North and are received and interpreted differently by host communities and states.

In response to Doreen Massey's (2004, p. 6) call for geographies of responsibility, I agree with her that "identities are forged in and through relations (which include non-relations, absences and hiatuses)" that are interconnected in multiple ways across space and place. In the context of refugee studies, the identities of the asylum seeker, refugee, migrant, and ethnic group are treated as foundational identities, even though they are fluid. Through an active process of labelling, these identities are defined and fixed during border crossings and in spaces of encampment to regulate and control bodies considered to be outside their "natural" and national geographies (Malkki, 1992). Policymakers and researchers appear incognizant of how such labels manifest, travel, and are understood at different spatial scales, outside legal and policy frameworks. Following on from Massey, bodies carry meanings into place. Bodies subjected to humanitarian care carry distinct identities and produce an embodied sense of place that affects how they negotiate their sense of belonging.

RACE: THE MISSING CATEGORY IN REFUGEE RESEARCH

In my decades of researching and observing refugee situations, I have been puzzled by the lack of attention to the interconnections of refugeeism and racialization, especially when refugees are predominantly non-white people in and/or of the Global South. It is impossible to miss the racialized hierarchies in humanitarian work, in peace missions—in whose lives have the right to be protected and the right to abandonment, who is or is not allowed on the last flight out at times of life-threatening emergencies, and who is inside and outside the bunker (Duffield, 2012). Why, then, have race and racialization as analytical categories taken so long to be addressed by academic researchers, and why are they still largely ignored by policy-makers and humanitarian practitioners?

The decolonizing movement emanating from the Global South has demonstrated the continued coloniality of existence and poses epistemic questions about how being and belonging are understood in a world shaped by European colonialism and its legacies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). The labels of **refugee** and **migrant** and the space/-places associated with these labels and their relationship to international humanitarian, national, and local actors reproduce racialized hierarchies that affect how refugees are treated and how such identities are experienced in interactions and negotiations with local people (Daley et al., 2018; Fassin, 2010). As Mayblin (2017, p. 11) argues, this can be traced back to the "role slavery [and its abolition] played in influencing early conceptions of humanity and differential rights" in the West. In Tanzania, such hierarchies are a consequence of colonial categorizations of ethnic groups and of the citizen/refugee differentiation that has accompanied the nation-state project.

Scholars attempting to conceptualize the precarity of refugee life, especially in camps, have drawn on Giorgio Agamben's (1998) notion of "bare life" or Michel Foucault's (1976) "biopolitics" without centring race or other aspects of bodily differences. This is not surprising because critical race theorists have pointed out the lack of a race analysis in both Agamben's and Foucault's theorizations (Weheliye, 2014). Foucault's omissions of discussion of colonialism are argued to put race beyond the boundaries of Europe. Race and ethnicity are treated in Western thought as if they operate in non-Western spaces, beyond the space occupied by white people.

The institutionalization of race with colonialism and the association of whiteness with "civilization," greater access to resources, and elevated levels of humanity, including traits such as empathy and morality, reinforce the differential treatment of people racialized as white and "others." With humanitarianism, the white saviour becomes the custodian of Black life, irrespective of whether the vulnerability of such life originated in policies emanating from the Global North or arose from continued coloniality. The humanitarian refugee body is racialized in that it exists only in oppressive relationships. In the same way that Frantz Fanon (1967, p. 83) contends that the "black man has no ontological existence in the eyes of the white man," I contend here that liberal humanitarianism divides humanity into "civilized" humans and lesser humans, who can be subjected to conditions deemed unacceptable for the so-called civilized, and that such thinking has been absorbed even by sections of Global South societies.

Drawing from Fanon (1967), I argue that in Western conceptualization, refugees,

when placed under liberal humanitarian subjection, have had, in the same way as Fanon's Black man, their frames of reference wiped out (their customs and sources to which they were based, in which they could place themselves). Therefore, the body of the refugee is not dissimilar to that of Fanon's Black body, "surrounded by an atmosphere of uncertainty" (1967, p. 83). This recognition of the constitutive role of power was necessary in the context of colonialism, as for many, the removal of agency from the colonized was one of the worst outcomes of colonialism (Noxolo et al., 2012; Osei-Nyame, 2009).

In refugee studies, the dehumanizing treatment and deaths of people from the Global South trying to seek asylum in Global North countries that have championed universal human rights has forced the emergence of a racial analysis in academic scholarship. De Genova (2018, p. 1766), for example, argues that the migrant crisis in Europe is a racial crisis evidenced in the "brute racial fact of [the] deadly European border regime," which promotes a pure white Europe vulnerable to the pollution of the non-white other. Kyriakides et al. (2019, p. 5) view race "as part of an embedded structure of oppression in which the racialized refugee regime is generated and reproduced." In Africa, race thinking in the treatment of refugees by humanitarian actors adds to the legacy of the racialized and ethnicized colonial categorization of humanity. Colonial identity politics and its legacies remain significant in affecting outcomes for African refugees (Brankamp & Daley, 2020). Therefore, the effects of the categorization of humans cannot be confined to the past, nor to specific geographical spaces, and demand a relational understanding.

Centring racialization as an analytical tool in refugee studies necessitates historical and contemporary studies of how racialized others have been treated in the colonial context and in humanitarian law and practice. In such vein is Mayblin's (2017) study of the attitudes to the human rights of the colonized others in the era of colonization/decolonization and its historical connections to slavery and abolition. Similarly, Krause's (2021) timely research explores the development of the "Eurocentric" and "colonial-ignorant" 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention. Forced migrants elsewhere were not expected to fit into the Convention and were deliberately marginalized and othered.

Continuing to push the methodological approach of intersectionality as a frame of analysis might reveal further how the international legal concepts that are deployed as universal are differentially practised on bodies and experienced and read in diverse places (Taha, 2019). An intersectional approach will reveal that the legal categories of asylum seeker and refugee are just two of a range of overlapping modern legal identities people have adopted—the essentialization of which can result in dehumanizing policies and practices. Yacob-Haliso (2016), for example, demonstrates in her study of the application of the United Nations' "durable solution" to refugee women in Nigeria and Liberia that the universal liberal definition of **gender** that the international refugee regime utilizes is flawed in that it does not account for inequities and intersectional issues among refugee women and can entrench rather than address disadvantage.

Following decolonial scholars such as Rutabizwa (2021), I argue for scholarship that recognizes the existence of a more pluriversal humanitarianism that (a) historicizes and challenges the bureaucratic social categories deployed for migration governance and seeks ways of being beyond them; and (b) recognizes that human morality,

empathy, solidarity, and responsibility are not confined to people from one part of the globe but is shared by all humanity. This necessitates new methodologies that start with refugees as people rather than bureaucratic categories and can be supported by (c) archival work—revisiting, for example, the work of the Organization of African Unity (now African Union) liberation committee, its principled stance against oppressions, and humanitarian support for Africans fleeing apartheid regimes. Such research would involve excavating silenced histories of global solidarity among non-white peoples and, in the contemporary period, researching, mapping, and documenting everyday forms of conviviality and mutuality.

The everyday acts of solidarity that I have witnessed in refugee-hosting communities in Tanzania are often seen as transgressive by states and international agencies, as they challenge institutional and researchers' preoccupations with antagonistic identities and consolidation of nation-states territoriality, and demonstrate that even in adverse conditions, people can coexist beyond, amid, and in spite of international interventions. While most of the literature focuses on an individualized conception of agency, there is greater need to attend to the interrelations, interconnections, and mutuality existing beyond the white and northern humanitarian gaze.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of dehumanizing policies and acts against refugees in the contemporary era requires a return to activist and ethical scholarship focusing on social justice that characterized the early years of refugee studies. To understand the experiences of hostility, rejection, and dejection faced by former refugees, such as those in Tanzania discussed here, we need to employ analytical tools that interpret these affective responses not as isolated new developments but as the manifestations and magnification of underlying resentments and dehumanizing practices in liberal humanitarianism encounters with racialized others. Such a step should not just be about incorporating race into our research but should advance an anti-racist agenda with counter-hegemonic critiques, new approaches, and new terminologies emphasizing alternative ways of belonging, a common humanity, and mutuality, and recognizing that how we do refugee research has enduring and sometimes unexpected negative impacts long after we have left the field.

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"Is it Commerce?": Dehumanization in the Framing of Refugees as Resources

Yolanda Weima

ABSTRACT

The idea that "refugees are resources" has been promoted as countering the dehumanization that frames refugees as burdens or security threats. But is framing people as resources truly humanizing? Resource theorists have highlighted how modern Western conceptions of what resources are depends on a distinction between the human and the non-human. This logic is similar to, and originates in the same epoch as, racialized hierarchies of humanity. State appraisal and management of human labour and mobility continue to be shaped by race and perceptions of productive value in economistic terms, just as the value of resources varies, and has always been social and political. This intervention highlights the perspective of a Burundian refugee in Tanzania who traces continuities between animalizing experiences and being called a resource—in that a resource can be sold or traded across borders with no input into its future. Refugees can and do meaningfully contribute to the communities and countries in which they live, but the "resources" lens curtails a truly humanizing perspective on refugees' lives.

KEYWORDS

dehumanization; animalization; refugees-as-resources; discourse analysis; race

RÉSUMÉ

L'idée selon laquelle les réfugiés constituent des «ressources» a été prônée afin de contrer le cadrage déshumanisant des réfugiés comme des fardeaux ou comme une menace sécuritaire. Mais le cadrage des personnes comme ressources n'est-il pas réellement humanisant? Les théoriciens des ressources ont souligné que les conceptions modernes occidentales de ce que constituent des ressources repose sur la distinction entre l'humain et le non-humain. Cette logique est similaire à la hiérarchisation racialisée de l'humanité et trouve son origine à la même époque. L'évaluation et la gestion du travail humain et de la mobilité par l'État continuent d'être façonnées par la «race» et par la perception de la valeur productive en termes économiques, tout comme la valeur accordée aux ressources varie et a toujours été sociale et politique. Cette intervention met en lumière la perspective d'un réfugié burundais en Tanzanie qui retrace la continuité entre des expériences d'animalisation et le fait d'être traité comme une ressource - en ce qu'une ressource peut être vendue ou échangée sans être consultée sur son avenir. Il est vrai que les réfugiés contribuent de manière significative aux communautés et aux pays où ils vivent, mais le prisme des «ressources» pose des limites à une perspective réellement humanisante sur la vie des réfugiés.

KEYWORDS

dehumanization; animalization; refugees-as-resources; discourse analysis; race

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INTRODUCTION

At a time when animalizing and other dehumanizing language has been prominent in media and political speech about refugees, often along with the framing of refugees as burdens and dangerous, the idea that "refugees are resources" has been promoted by some academics as a progressive and pragmatic response to the dehumanization of refugees and migrants. For example, in a presentation entitled "Refugees as a Resource," Betts states that his argument is simply "these people are human beings" (Skoll.org, 2016, 20:47). This discourse is not new, and it is strongly allied with theories that promote neoliberal economic development, self-reliance, and capitalist globalization orientations in refugee response.

While not refuting that refugees are often "resourceful and positively contributing" (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020, p. 2), the concern of this intervention is to interrogate the specific claims of humanization in the "refugees-as-resources" framing. In doing so, this intervention is situated within broader critiques of "using" refugees within hegemonic, neoliberal development aims, in what Morris (2019) terms the "refugee industry" (Crawley, 2017; Daley, 1989; Hyndman and Reynolds, 2020; Kyriakides et al., 2019; Morris, 2019; Ramsay, 2020; Zamore, 2018; Turner, 2019). These critical approaches challenge the possibility of "harnessing globalization" as a humanitarian "solution" (Betts and Collier, 2017, p. 176), as well as the idea that framing people as resources is humanizing rather than objectifying and inherently hierarchical. As Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2020) has demonstrated, even so-called "'pro-refugee' narratives" shape ideas around who is "**truly** worthy of protection," whether due to perceived vulnerability and victimhood or as outstanding entrepreneurs, "appropriately resourceful and positively contributing to the local and global neoliberal economy," in ways that are "permeated by hierarchical processes of inclusion and exclusion, including on the basis of gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and location" (pp. 2-3). I argue that modern conceptualizations of "resources" rely on human/non-human distinctions to define commodities for the extraction of value, and they are bound up with racialized hierarchies fundamental to capitalism. Resource language can thus be dehumanizing.

Following a brief introduction of the refugees-as-resources discourse, related policies, and critiques, this intervention centres on a critical perspective on the resources discourse shared by Onesphore,[1] a Burundian refugee in a camp in Tanzania. He relates being called a resource to being dehumanized and commoditized, within the context of extended encampment and recurrent displacement. My encounter with Onesphore, and analysis of his critique derives from ethnographic methods and life-history research with Burundian refugees in two camps in Tanzania in 2017–2018, centred on how recurrent displacement after prior returns shapes refugees' enduring experiences of encampment. Following the vignette, I draw on geographical scholarship to ask what resources actually are. Modern Western conceptions of resources rely on a distinction between the human and the non-human, in a similar way to, and emerging in the same epoch as, modern conceptions of "race." State appraisal and management of human labour and mobility continue to be shaped by racism and perceptions of produc-

[1] A pseudonym.

tive value in economistic terms—just as the value of and demand for resources varies and has always been social and political.

A "NEW (OLD) APPROACH" AND NEW (OLD) CRITIQUES: REFUGEES AS RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Like many recurring humanitarian methodologies, the refugees-as-resources discourse is not new. Harrell-Bond (1995, p. 10) termed it a "new (old) approach" when highlighting the key terms promoted in state and humanitarian refugee policy and programmes in the early 1980s. At the Second International Conference on Refugees in Africa (ICARA II) in 1984, **refugees as resources for development** was one of the key phrases, as UNHCR emphasized the necessity to promote development for "refugee affected areas" in order for solutions to displacement to be durable (Harrell-Bond, 1995). Such approaches had already been at work in Africa and elsewhere (Daley, 1989). For example, Rwandans who sought refuge in neighbouring countries in 1963 were targeted with "integrated zonal development" programs (UNHCR, 1969, cited in Zamore 2018, p. 33). The language of using refugees as resources was already in play in development-oriented refugee assistance: "Encouraged by events in Burundi and elsewhere, UNHCR and its partners convened a conference in Addis Ababa in October 1967 to consider 'the role of refugees in economic and social development and their utilization as human resources"' (UNHCR, 1969, cited in Zamore, 2008, p. 33). Recently this discourse has re-emerged, advocated by some refugee studies scholars, as well as think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and governments, including the former Canadian minister for immigration, as a way to positively frame the politics of refugee reception and hosting in the face of hostility (Skoll.org, 2016; Schmitt & World Economic Forum, 2017). It has been part of mainstream arguments to extend encamped refugees labour and mobility rights, such as through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Frameworks (CRRF), which are a cornerstone of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) framework.

While intended as a positive discourse on refugee contributions to the societies in which they live, such economistic approaches, and the related framing of refugees as resources, are not without critique within progressive refugee studies. These critiques do not question the premise that refugees can and do contribute to host societies in diverse ways. Rather, many draw on critical political economy to question the underlying logics of the developmental approaches being advocated. Development strategies oriented towards refugees have, from their beginnings, differed little from dominant international development strategies, including, for example, structural adjustment programmes, which have been widely critiqued as deepening inequalities and poverty (Daley, 1989; Zamore, 2018). The promotion of refugee "self-sufficiency" was (and is) more oriented towards reducing aid budgets than increasing well-being (Zamore, 2018). Contemporary proposals for "harnessing globalization" include allowing refugees to work in **special economic zones**, a spatial technology of neoliberal accumulation by dispossession, which have been termed "special exploitation zones" in other contexts (Crawley, 2017, p. 27; Zamore, 2018), and echo the emphasis in past decades on incorporation in global markets through commodity production and deregulation (Daley, 1989). So far, such approaches, currently paradigmatically promoted through the CRRF of the GCR, seem likely to maintain

the status quo rather than meaningfully challenge the containment, exclusion, and even expulsion of "refugee-migrants" (Hyndman & Reynolds, 2020, p. 67).

This intervention complements these critical political economic analyses with a focus on the discursive claim that the framing of refugees as (potential) resources is humanizing. While the refugees-as-resources discourse promoted within refugee studies and policy frameworks is generally positioned as opposed to encampment, advocating for the right to work and mobility, perspectives from contexts of containment and encampment open a broader discussion of the idea of "resources" within capitalism, and how this discourse can be tied to dehumanization and racial hierarchies. In analyzing Australia's offshore detention of refugees, Morris (2019) applies a critical resource-extraction framework to the refugee industry in the post-phosphate, extraction-based economy of Nauru. Her framework situates refugees as resources in an extractive industry, which creates value not through the labour of refugees but through their containment; she does not aim "to re-objectify people as commodities, but to underline how they can be treated as such" (Morris, 2019, p. 1124). Morris draws on Ruth Wilson Gilmore's abolitionist theorization of the American prison industrial complex, which highlights how prisons allow for capitalist accumulation, not primarily because of prisoner labour but because they are "extractive, in that they enable money to move because of the enforced inactivity of people locked in them" (Gilmore, 2015, 10:04, cited in Morris, 2019, p. 1124; see also Gilmore, 2017, p. 228; and see Brankamp, 2021 for abolitionist perspectives on refugee camps). Morris extends this critique to the containment of refugees, which resonates with contexts of refugee encampment elsewhere in the world where refugees are barred from employment but still framed as resources, as analyzed in the vignette below, which opens my discussion of dehumanization in the conceptualization of resources in capitalism more broadly.

"SOMETHING YOU CAN SELL … LIKE A GOAT": ONESPHORE'S PERSPECTIVE ON BEING CALLED A RESOURCE

While there were dances and choirs, World Refugee Day 2018 did not end in a celebratory mood for most Burundian refugees who attended the official festivities in Nduta camp, Tanzania. Directly following refugee speeches emphasizing the need for ongoing refuge for many, a Tanzanian government representative reiterated calls for Burundian refugees to "go home." One might assume that in this context, refugees could favour being framed as resources or benefits to their host country in order to advocate extending their refuge and contesting return. On the contrary, it is in discussing these calls to return that Onesphore, a Burundian refugee, shared with me how he and others negatively interpreted the refugees-as-resources discourse, which was included in speeches during World Refugee Day the year before. Ultimately, Onesphore found the idea of being considered "resources," rather than a humanizing or pragmatic advocacy strategy in refugees' situation, dehumanizing—like being compared to goats, a non-human resource that can be bought, sold, and traded without a say in the matter.

This vignette follows the order in which Onesphore shared his ideas and wove together metaphor, experiences, and his perceptions of the politics of refugee hosting in the region. I include the longer conversational context of his comments on "resources" to draw their connection to

animalization and questions of voice and agency, as well as labour and profit. The conversation began with a discussion of how refugees were not given a genuine platform to dispute the claims by the Burundian and Tanzanian governments that they caused insercurity, that what they fled was over, and that they should return. Onesphore illustrated this observation with a poignant metaphor:

> When you raise a goat in a stable, and the goat has two, three, or four kids, the owner has the right to do what he wants, and the goat can't do anything. It has no rights. To slaughter the goat, he might say that the goat is not listening well, or there is not much grass. Is the goat going to refuse? If there was someone who could [speak up], the goat would have the right to refuse. It's like here in Tanzania—we refugees are like goats, which is to say, there are no rights [translation note: or law (fr: droit)] that protects us.

He then associated the current call for Burundian refugees to return with the violent closure of Mtabila camp in 2012. He recounted how the commandant of the now defunct Mtabila camp told the refugees, "'even if you go [back to Burundi], in a short while we will see you again.'—And even now they say if you go back …". Trailing off, he seemed to imply that after returning to Burundi (again) they may have to seek refuge again. Less than three years after the closure of Mtabila camp, he had been one of hundreds of thousands of Burundians to seek refuge again. While the refugees-as-resources rhetoric may be meant to counter forced return and encourage states to continue providing refuge, his own experiences contributed to a different interpretation, which he signaled with a direct question: "Est-ce que c'est un commerce?"—Is it commerce (or trade)? Here, Onsephore made the connection between the back-and-forth movement of refugees, regardless of their wishes, to the trade of animals or other commodities.

For World Refugee Day in 2017, Onesphore remembered, one of the key slogans of the events in the camp had been "We are resources for their country." In the original Swahili the slogan was "Rasilimali za nchi." (This was not the official World Refugee Day slogan that year, but one that had been used in the speeches as Tanzania and UNHCR began to promote the later cancelled CRRF). One formal translation of rasilimali is "resources, assets, or capital of the nation" (Taasisi ya Uchinguzi wa Kiswahili, 2000, "Rasilimali"). An interpreter explained that he and others in the camp would use the term more specifically to mean "something you can sell, like a tree, a goat, etc. … to get capital, money to start a business."

"If we return and come back again," Onesphore continued, "nous sommes des commerces. … Ils nous prennent comme un resource." We are trade, commercial products. They treat us like a resource. "We continue to build their economy," he added.

The animalization metaphor that Onesphore first introduced is immediately recognizable as descriptive of an experience of dehumanization. Animalization metaphors were used by Burundian refugees in many interviews, in the context of broader life narratives, to explain experiences of dehumanization in the refugee camp context.[2] Comparing people with non-human things,

[2]Rather than highlighting animalizing discourse (of policy-makers, media, etc.), Burundian refugees used metaphors and analogies to discuss the ways in which the everyday practices of humanitarian aid and policing of the refugee camps were experienced as similar to the treatment of animals. Being enclosed in a limited space without the freedom to move elsewhere, receiving the same poor-quality and insufficient quantity of food month after month, and being beaten without recourse if caught outside the camp or if protesting within the camp were all common reasons for animal comparisons. These metaphors and analogies revealed strong resonance with the arguments about the inhumanity of humanitarianism made by Harrell-Bond (2002)

like animals, is not in and of itself necessarily dehumanizing but rather depends on contextual factors (Haslam et al., 2011). There is continuity between Onesphore's goat metaphor and his exclamation that Burundian refugees had been treated as commercial goods—traded back and forth across borders without much say about their situation.

Onesphore's observation of refugees "continuing to build their economy" and thus being "resources" can be interpreted in three registers, all of which Onesphore mentioned during this conversation and other refugees discussed in more extended interviews. First, economic benefit may refer to refugees' labour. Burundians are not technically allowed to work without difficult-to-access permits in Tanzania, but they fill thousands of necessary "incentive" positions as poorly compensated "volunteers" in the camp, building infrastructure and providing services that also benefit surrounding communities. They have long played important but clandestine roles in the agricultural economy of the region beyond the camps (Masabo et al., 2018; Whitaker, 1999). The restrictions on their labour, and **not** having the formal right to work, is what keeps their wages low and their working conditions poor, in some ways increasing the enrichment from their labour. This situation is perhaps in contradiction with the refugees-as-resources approach that frames expanding refugees access to formal labour markets and the right to work as increasing benefits to hosts.

Second, and less related to dominant understandings of the resources discourse, Onesphore and other Burundians suspected Tanzanians of stealing aid intended for refugees or otherwise being involved in humanitarian corruption. Such rumours were common. Corruption is one of the ways refugees believe others benefit from their presence and dispossession. Despite humanitarian campaigns and illustrated signs in the camp encouraging refugees to report corruption, many feel there is little effective recourse in such cases because of the power imbalances in aid management and distribution. (As such cases have been reported at length in other countries, it is not unreasonable to believe that such illicit profit is made from refugees as resources in many contexts.)

Finally, and perhaps most directly relevant to the narrative as recounted above, in introducing how refugees build the economy, Onesphore referred to the back-and-forth refuge and return of Burundians, which he sees as being like trade, and the treatment of refugees like commercial goods. In part, this echoes rumours in the camp that Burundian refugees had been "sold"—a belief by many refugees that the Burundian government had paid money to the Tanzanian government to force the Burundians who had fled their regime to return (see Turner, 2004 on the prevalence and politics of rumours in prior refugee camps in Tanzania). Rumours aside, Onesphore and other refugees are aware that the arrival and presence of refugees in camps has brought economic benefits and jobs to the region, while return and resettlement programs also include benefits on the other side of the border. While the return program is currently framed as voluntary, many refugees experienced or had been aware of prior violent forced return and so felt they would not ultimately be able to refuse repatriation. Governments and humanitarian organizations make decisions about return, with little genuine consultation with refugees. Claiming there is peace, or that the refugees cause insecurity, just like the owner of the goat in Onesphore's metaphor can say "that the goat is not listening well, or that there is not much

grass" when justifying his decision to sell or slaughter the goat, with no one to refute the claims. No one listens to the goat, as a non-human commodity—a resource—just as Onesphore feels refugees' concerns about return are not considered.

RESOURCE POLITICS, RACIALIZED HIERARCHIES, AND THE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN MOBILITY

What is a resource? A key disciplinary reference in geography suggests that **resource** is "a deceptively peaceable term that conceals the profoundly political relations through which humans attribute value to the non-human world" (Bridge, 2009, p. 648). The ways resources are understood and valued have always been social and relational, bound up with relations of power and the organization of society to create and satisfy "needs and wants" (Bridge, 2009, p. 649). The labelling of anything as a resource cannot be taken for granted. The differentiation of resources from the human is linked to the centrality of the term in the emergence of modernity and capitalism (Bridge, 2009). Distinctions between humans and nature were articulated to define resources. In the same period, **Man** (as white, European, and "civilized") was being created as distinct from other humans, considered closer to nature in emergent racialized hierarchical categorizations. Modern conceptions of both **resource** and **race** were developed to justify colonial and imperial exploitative expansion and right to resources globally and the treatment of human beings as other-than-human resources (Bridge, 2009; Johnston, 2009; Wynter, 2003).

The emergence of the definition of resources as other than human in conjunction with histories of people traded across borders because of their utility to capitalist production should make us wary of promoting the economic utility of people as resources as a primary justification for welcoming refugees. The value and mobility of human labour continues to be structured by race (Brankamp & Daley, 2020; Gilmore, 2017; Mullings, 2017), including in humanitarian settings (Turner, 2019; Daley, 2007; Hyndman , 2000). For example, Turner (2019) argues that the way that humanitarians' celebration of entrepreneurship of Syrian refugees in Jordan relies on implicit and explicit comparison with African refugees as less entrepreneurial and more aid-dependent is "inextricably intertwined with processes of racialisation, which serve to reproduce both white supremacy and anti-black racism"(p. 138). Brankamp & Daley (2020) trace the continuities between colonial categorization and attempts to manage the mobility of East Africans based on "differential valuation of human worth, economic benefits, and racialization" and anti-refugee rhetoric by host states in regions that have long depended on border-crossers as labour (p. 114). This genealogical approach highlights the connections between "colonial views on the need to make 'out-of-place' Africans productive" and "contemporary discourses about refugee economies and the utilization of refugee labor" (p. 116). Resource theorists point to the fact that resources are differently valued at different times in different societies, often based on their value to the productive capacities of the state (Bridge, 2009). If refugees are resources, for whom are they creating value? How does this value change? And which resources are constructed as having less value than others? Which groups of refugees and people on the move are valued as "resources" to host societies' remains shaped by racialized hierarchies of human value.

The possible dehumanization of the refugees-as-resource discourse and the insistence on refugees' humanity by those employing it is a productive contradiction. Vaughan-Williams (2015) draws on Derrida's idea of the "zoopolitical" to analyze the simultaneous animalizing management of migrants at the border-zones of Europe and insistence on human-rights–based and migrant-centred approaches by migration management agencies. Zoos were developed not only to contain animals, but also to produce knowledge about them: "Zoopolitical" governance, then, operates "to immobilise and render otherwise 'unknowable' populations 'knowable"' (Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 9). Resource theories point to similar governance. The very idea of a resource is a way of knowing and valuing that which is other than human. Resource politics overlaps with the zoopolitical in that resource governance seeks knowledge of resources and control over trade, and also because animals may also be framed as resources, like goats in Onesphore's metaphor.

Metaphorically calling a person a resource can have positive intentions and may not always be inherently dehumanizing, but there are contexts in which it can be interpreted and experienced that way, as highlighted in Onesphore's analysis of the slogan. In a situation where refugees have little freedom, and decisions about them are made without them, Onesphore feels that he has been traded across borders, like a commodity, while others profit from refugee movements. Onesphore's analysis of his context resonates with Morris (2019) critique of the extractive nature of the refugee industry, where value is created not necessarily from refugees' labour but from their containment (as resources). Strict encampment (like in Tanzania) may not be the intended context of the refugees-and-development discourse, which claims to promote refugees' rights to work and mobility. Nevertheless, the discourse relies on hierarchical assumptions of the value of humans when they must be framed as resources in order to be "worthy" of refuge, doing little to challenge containment (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020; Hyndman & Reynolds, 2020). The value of labour has always been racialized in capitalism and, within the refugee industry, continues to be (Turner, 2019). Critical scholarship on resources points to how ways of knowing resources have been bound up with power and defined distinctions of humans from nature at a time in which racializing hierarchies sought to do the same.

The ways that refugees and people on the move are framed as "resources" to host societies remains shaped by racialized hierarchies of human value. Being "a resource" or a "benefit" should not be the basis of refuge, as it does not inherently challenge encampment, dispossession, exploitation, and exclusion. In questioning the refugee-resources rhetoric, I am not opposing the idea that refugees can and do meaningfully benefit the communities and countries in which they live, and the world more broadly, despite structural constraints that limit possibilities for refugees in many places. Rather, the richness of these contributions can be highlighted and better promoted without dehumanizing language that equates people with non-human goods or the framing of refugees' value to societies through a narrowly economistic lens.

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On Refugee Agency, Bio-Politics, and a New World

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ABSTRACT

This short intervention starts by discussing Giorgio Agamben's theoretical formulation of 'bare life,' popular in refugee studies. Thinking with the case study of Palestinian refugee camps, particularly in the West Bank, it argues that there are clear limitations to the discourse of biopolitics and bare life. I argue that 'bare life' neither accounts for the multilayered relations of power, particularly colonialism, slavery, and indigenous genocide, that systemically make certain populations more susceptible to its power than others. Nor does it account for the modes of sociality of those who are systemically relegated to its sphere. I conclude by working through some of the theoretical formulations around body politics from the field of Black studies, particularly Alexander Weheliye's 2014 concept of the flesh, in order to explore new directions they may point us towards in refugee studies.

KEYWORDS

refugee camps; flesh; bare life; refugee studies; biopolitics; settler colonialism

RÉSUMÉ

Cette courte intervention débute par une discussion de la formulation théorique de Giorgio Agamben sur la «vie nue», populaire dans les études sur les réfugiés. À partir de l'étude de cas des camps de réfugiés palestiniens, en particulier en Cisjordanie, elle soutient qu'il existe des limitations claires au discours de la biopolitique et de la vie nue. Je soutiens que la «vie nue» ne rend pas compte des rapports de pouvoir à plusieurs niveaux, en particulier le colonialisme, l'esclavage, et le génocide des autochtones, qui rendent certaines populations plus vulnérables que d'autres à son pouvoir. Elle ne rend pas compte non plus des modes de sociabilité de ceux qui sont relégués à sa sphère. Je conclus en examinant certaines des formulations théoriques entourant les politiques du corps dans le champ des Black Studies, et particulièrement le concept de «chair» chez Alexander Weheliye (2014) afin d'explorer les nouvelles avenues qu'elles pourraient ouvrir dans les études sur les réfugiés.

KEYWORDS

refugee camps; flesh; bare life; refugee studies; biopolitics; settler colonialism

INTRODUCTION

In this short intervention, I discuss Giorgio Agamben's theoretical formulation of "bare life," which is popular in refugee studies. This formulation specifically pertains to the positionality of refugees vis-à-vis Western liberal democracies and emerges from

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Agamben's 1998 analysis of the concentration camp as emblematic of the workings of Western sovereignty, which is understood here as geographically and historically specific. To a large extent, Agamben's formulations emerge from his attempt to depart from Foucault's theory of power as decentralized and spasmodic. Thinking through the spaces of Palestinian refugee camps, I aim to demonstrate the limitations of this discourse of biopolitics and bare life in accounting for the multi-layered power relations that produce the Palestinian refugee camps. Palestinian refugee camps were created following the Palestinian catastrophe (**Al Nakba**) in 1948 and are spread across multiple Arab countries; they are constantly reproduced by interlocking logics of power, including humanitarianism, the Arab postcolonial states, and the Israeli settler colonial apparatus. I conclude by working through some of the theoretical formulations around body politics from the field of Black studies, particularly Alexander Weheliye's 2014 concept of the flesh, in order to explore new directions they may point us towards in refugee studies.

BARE LIFE

The theoretical formulations proposed by Agamben and Foucault have gained particular popularity in refugee studies (Tuastad, 2017; Chatty, 2017; Hanafi & Long, 2010; Hanafi, 2013; Minco et al., 2021). Both Foucault and Agamben write from a specific historical and geographic locality—that of Europe and its shifting paradigms of nation-state control. They write from specific subjective positions that address the objective, historical conditions of their time. In his discussion of Foucault and the applicability of his theory of power, Said (1983) notes that Foucault's theoretical formulations are admirable responses to the ahistorical formalism that defined much of the literature he was in debate with. Yet, Said (1983) also notes and anticipates the "disturbing circularity of Foucault's theory of power" as a "form of theoretical overtotalization," which in proposing that power is everywhere leaves no space for resistance, rebellion, and friction (p. 246). He warns, rather pre-emptively, that we must not let Foucault get away "with letting us forget that history does not get made without work, intention, resistance, effort, or conflict, and that none of these things is silently absorbable into micronetworks of power" (p. 245).[1]

Bare life was first formulated by Giorgio Agamben in 1998 and is a by-product of his critical debate with, among other thinkers, the French theorist Michel Foucault.[2] It has **travelled** to become almost ubiquitous within the field of refugee studies, leading one observer to note that "in research on camps Agamben has become something of a 'straw man'—invariably, and often superfi-

[1] While Said's earlier writings, including Orientalism (1978), deployed Foucauldian notions, his latter were more critical. For more, see Ahmad (1994), chapter 5, "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said."

[2] Though Agamben's thought is largely oriented by Foucault's, he criticizes him for not bringing his insights "to bear on what could well have appeared to be the exemplary place of modern biopolitics: the politics of the great totalitarian states of the twentieth century" (Agamben, 1998, p. 119). He therefore departs from Foucault's understanding of power in many ways. Unlike Foucault, Agamben seems to acknowledge the existence of structures, especially that of sovereignty, which centralizes power. In other words, according to Agamben, power does have a centre by virtue of existing within structures. Though he conceives of this sovereign power as being shattered into members of the political community (rather than being embodied in one figure, that of the king), it is still centralized. The king was not killed when the formal monarchic structures in the West were transformed; rather, the king, connoting centralized power, was shattered into the political members of the community after the development of regulations and mechanisms to manage life. To Foucault, in contrast, power has no centre, and it functions within a network of force relations that constitute "power techniques and technologies to subjugate the body and control the population" (1988, p. 140). For more, see Foucault's, The History of Sexuality (1988) and Agamben's Homo Sacer (1998).

cially, invoked only to be torn down again" (Abourahme, 2015, p. 201). Agamben (1998, p. 73) notes that modern sovereignty is constituted and haunted by homo sacer: a human being that can be killed without constituting a sacrifice (divine law) and without impunity (humane law).

The systematic banning of homo sacer from the political community relegates him to naked or bare life (Agamben (1998), p. 83). Bare life persists in the "state of exception," a concept first formulated by the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt (2005) that refers to a state where both humane and divine laws are suspended. The suspension of both laws constitutes the "sovereign sphere" integral to the originary structure of Western politics, whereby sovereignty can unleash its most brutal forces with no accountability. Agamben (1998, p. 8) states, "There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion." In other words, to differentiate political life (*bios*) from mere biological life (*zoë)* is what produces, reproduces, and fuels Western politics, and this differentiation is quite violent. By being relegated to bare life, homo sacer ironically embodies a double position: she persists in the sphere where the most brutal faces of sovereignty manifest, which is also the sphere that holds Western democracies together by constituting their other; those relegated to bare life are therefore included by virtue of their exclusion.

Despite the specific historical context from which this debate emerges and the omissions it entails, the theories of both Foucault and Agamben are often seen as universally applicable, as travelling theories that can formulaically help us understand realities in other spatialities and temporalities (Weheliye, 2014).[3] Critical theorist Alexander Weheliye (2014) suggests that this is part of a larger tendency within academia "in which theoretical formulations by white European thinkers are granted a conceptual carte blanche, while those uttered from the purview of minority discourse that speak to the same questions are almost exclusively relegated to the jurisdiction of ethnographic locality" (p. 6). In other words, formulations by thinkers such as Agamben and Foucault are unquestionably seen as universally applicable, despite being Eurocentric and ethnospecific in their analysis, while those coming from fields such as Black studies, postcolonial studies, and subaltern studies, are seen as ethno-specific. This is not to dismiss the important contributions Foucault and Agamben made. Rather, it is to encourage a critical assessment of them as well as the historical conditions of their knowledge production and its omissions.

THE CAMP AS A RACIAL AND COLONIAL MECHANISM

Agamben's sovereign sphere, what he terms the "zone of indistinction" (1998, p. 9), is "historically presaged and conceptually defined by the order of terror found in Nazi concentration camps" (Weheliye, 2014, p. 34). The concentration camp is taken up by Agamben as the archetypical space of modern calculated death. He says that the concentration camp is the "new biopolitical nomos of the planet" (Agamben, 1998, p. 45), equating it with modern politics. This reduces the multi-layered and complex nature of the former and elides the socio-historical specificity and thick relationality of the latter (Wehe-

[3] Weheliye (2014) offers an overview of the widespread use of Foucault and Agamben in discussions of power. See Weheliye's Habeas viscus (2014, pp. 1–16).

liye (2014), 2014, p. 34). It is this conceptual jump that allows him to constitute an abstract "zone of indistinction," an indivisible sphere where bare lives persist. Crucially, this zone also accounts only for mortality and leaves no space for sociality among those persisting within its all-encompassing confines.

To substantiate this point further, Weheliye (2014) traces the disjointed and discontinuous history of the concentration camp and its enmeshment within US settler colonialism and imperialism, German colonialism in Southwest Africa, and British colonialism in South Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He argues that "overall, a thick historical relation defines the rise of modern concentration camps in colonial contexts and their subsequent reconstitution as industrialized killing in Europe during the Third Reich" (p. 36). This socio-historical relation succinctly "languishes in Agamben's universalization of the concentration camp" (Weheliye, 2014, p. 36).

It is noteworthy that when tracing the genealogy of the refugee camp as a spatial mechanism of control and management, one notices a shift in both its application and proliferation since the Second World War (Chimni, 1998; Henni, 2017; Polzer, 2009; Smith, 2004). As many scholars have noted, the 1951 Refugee Convention, the cornerstone of the refugee protection system, was initially temporally (up to 1951) and geographically (within Europe) limited to European refugees (Mayblin, 2014). The British government in particular relentlessly argued to exclude the colonized from the Convention so that even the basic definition of **refugee** in international law was designed with the white, European male in mind (Mayblin, 2014). At its origin, the legal category of refugee was enmeshed within racial and colonial hierarchies. Thus, when the refugee protection system was being designed in the early 1950s, the imagined figure of the refugee remained European, and camps were therefore considered inhumane and dictatorial in nature (Smith, 2004). In contrast, the camp persisted in colonial contexts as a spatial mechanism of control and management. For example, in the same period, concentration camps proliferated all across settler colonial Algeria (Henni, 2017). In a post–Second World War reality, however, the French regime was doing all it could to misname these as **centres de regroupment** (regrouping centres), lest the racial dimensions of its selective use of the camp become exposed (Henni, 2017). In this way, while the camp was refuted as inhumane in postwar Europe, it gradually became a normalized mechanism of control and management to refugee/racialized/colonial subjects in and from the Global South (Chimni, 1998; Polzer, 2009).

Colonialism, slavery, and Indigenous genocide were the laboratories where concentration camps had been refined before and after they reached Europe, and as they "returned" to former colonies in humanitarian guise (Henni, 2017). Agamben's negligence of the constitutive role these regimes of oppression continue to play in defining the space of the camp, and the subsequent universalization of Agamben's theoretical formulations by scholars and students is what allows for the emergence of camps as abstracted "zones of indistinction." Abourahme (2015, p. 201) reminds us that Agamben has been widely misread in refugee studies and beyond, for Agamben "was not trying to produce an analytical tool for the study of camps but rather to use the figure or diagram of the abstract camp to conceptualize the state of exception (not vice versa)." While this is true, his zone of indistinction still disguises both the racializing hierarchies that structurally make

certain subjects more susceptible to personifying homo sacer as well as the power hierarchies that define it. Bare life is an extension of this zone of indistinction. Even at its point of origin as a concept formulated within and about Western Europe, "bare life" fails to account for what Weheliye (2014) terms the "racializing assemblages" that govern this systematic process of differentiation. In other words, it does not account for how slavery, colonialism, and genocide define the process of differentiation between who is deserving of personhood and who is not.

Bare lives, as the name suggests, are bare—stripped off of their politics, existing outside the political sphere. This is a natural conclusion to Agamben's theory: if politics is only generated by the state and its structures, then presuming those who exist outside of it do not have politics is a natural conclusion. To portray refugees as **bare** lives is to presume, as 2011, p. 14) suggests, that we know what politics looks like a priori. As Harney and Moten (2013) remind us, these "bare lives … turn out to be bare only insofar as no attention is paid to them, only insofar as such lives persist under the sign and weight of a closed question" (p. 48).

THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS

Existing analyses on Palestine in general, and Palestinian refugee camps across their geographic locations (the occupied territories, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan) in particular, have variably deployed the discourse of biopolitics and bare life (Chatty, 2017; Hanafi, 2013; Hanafi & Long, 2010; Lentin, 2008; Ramadan & Fregonese, 2017). In discussing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Hanafi & Long (2010, p. 148) argue that "there is no more telling marker of the refugee's status as homo sacer than the unregulated, urban, and prison-like conditions of his or her life in a camp." Similarly, Chatty (2017) suggests that Palestinian refugee camps can be fairly described as "sites of 'bare life,' where all agency and self-sufficiency are stripped away and the refugee enters a liminal status between citizen and outcast" (p. 183). In the same vein, Hanafi (2013) Hanafi (2013) states that "the space of the [Palestinian] refugee camps in Lebanon was treated as a space of exception and an experimental laboratory for control and surveillance" (p. 82). These accounts intend to highlight the brutality of nation-state formations in their handling of the so-called refugee problem and to shed light on their daily suffering.

Yet, an uninterrogated by-product of this application of theory is constituting refugees as lacking politics, as passive recipients of policies and humanitarian aid or, in the words of Miriam Ticktin (2011, p. 12), as "suffering bodies" in need of outside intervention. In this formulation, the refugee lacks agency for two reasons: first, because attention is not paid to their daily lives; and second, because the only form of agency we as scholars tend to identify is that prescribed by the Liberal nation-state—an agency grounded in an individual, volitional will, expressed through the medium of legal citizenship (Abourahme, 2015). In this analysis, the camp "appears either as fixed, immovable background—a totalizing biopolitical paradigm—that confirms their [the refugees'] helplessness or, at best, little more than a malleable resource in its overcoming" (Abourahme, 2015, p. 202).

However, the **actual** Palestinian camps are produced by interlocking relations of power, including carceral humanitarianism (Oliver, 2017), Israeli settler colonialism (Salamanca et al., 2012), racial capitalism (Robinson (1985), and Arab post-colonial states (Salih,

2013). In the particular context of the West Bank, refugee camps are sites of intensified settler colonial violence (Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska, 2017). Israeli settler colonialism is intent on erasing Palestinian geographies and bodies (Salamanca et al., 2012; Wolfe, 2006). Erasure is enacted through a quotidian structure of murder, maiming, curfews, and displaceability (Yiftachel, 2020). Refugee camps are also sites threatened with settler colonial erasure. As Israeli settlements expand and proliferate, the camp is encircled, walled off, militarized, and gradually constituted as an erasable sphere. While camps are spaces of intensified settler colonial violence, they also constitute a site that haunts Israeli settler colonialism by naming its originary structure of erasure (what Palestinians refer to as **al Nakba al Mustamerra**—the continuous Nakba). The camps bring the racial settler colonial logics of the Israeli state to the forefront.

The story of suffering is a dominant one within the refugee camps in general, and Palestinian refugee camps in particular. One cannot deny the bio-political functions of the camp as a space of humanitarian control and management: to count and register the refugees, to strictly measure their health needs, to provide them with a state-sanctioned education, and in the case of refugee camps in the West Bank, to militarily manage the population. But refugee camps also represent a complex relationality with the past, present, and future. They engulf meanings, stories, narratives, images, poetics, music, dance moves, murals, wounds, and wedding circles that make it hard to tell one unified story. **They are also differentiated:** they engulf family-based differences and class differences, gendered hierarchies and racial hierarchies. The camp is not merely a passive space onto which geographies of control and management are simply enacted but is also a space constantly produced and reproduced by those living within its alleys. To call this space a mere state of exception where "bare lives" persist is surely an oversimplification.

THE FLESH

Refugees are far from being **bare lives**; their bodies constitute sites onto which many "bodily-spatial struggles" manifest: struggles with memory and remembrance; with the space of the camp, its expansion, its constant remaking; with narratives, humanitarian and nationalist, that aim to tell a unified story of suffering for the former and heroism for the latter; and, in some cases, such as Israel, French settler colonial Algeria, Canada, the United States, and Australia, with the settler colonial state and its racial apparatus. To understand these struggles, we have to depart from state-centred approaches that aim to render them invisible and powerless (such as the expansion of settlements attempting to efface previous occupation, the walls and carceral humanitarianism described above, and the nation-state building project of the Palestinian Authority in the case of camps in the West Bank). This does not mean we should neglect the central role the state plays in defining the terrains onto which these struggles unfold. Rather, it means we should account for the role of the state while paying close attention to articulations of politics that transcend its limits.

In this regard, Weheliye's theoretical formulation of the "flesh" points us in new and helpful directions. He relies on contributions by Frantz Fanon, Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, and Toni Morrison to reclaim the histories, politics, and futures of those presumed to exist within the space of bare life. Instead of registering the livelihoods of bare lives only through their suffering, the **flesh**

acknowledges this suffering while accounting for the different politics that these bodies weave through their daily lives. In other words, this recognition of suffering does not presume the loss of the collective agency of refugees. There is politics within the space of the flesh precisely because these histories of brutality are carried within it. Weheliye (2014, p. 2) framing, therefore, allows us to understand the "violent political domination" permeating refugee experiences while simultaneously "reclaim[ing] the atrocity of the flesh as a pivotal arena for the politics emanating from different traditions of the oppressed." The flesh, simply put, offers an analytical framework conscious of the "racializing assemblages" that produce the space of bare life and the politics that informs it. It recognizes and takes seriously, for example, the fact that most refugees in today's world are Black and brown bodies, and that their stories of survival cannot be rendered fully intelligible through state-centred and policy-oriented frameworks that take their exclusion, be it partial or full, as an acceptable precondition. It articulates a different sense of the "political" and the "historical" by "insist[ing] on the importance of miniscule movements, glimmers of hope, scraps of food, the interrupted dreams of freedom found in those spaces deemed devoid of full human life" (Weheliye, 2014, p. 12).

This is not a call to impose a celebratory, individualistic, and citizenship-based agency on the bodies of refugees. Nor is it an endorsement of attempts within refugee studies to propose a neoliberal agency for refugees that devises notions of "innovation" and "entrepreneurship" to economize the space of the refugee camp;[4] these can be seen as ways of empowerment only if our framework of analysis takes the current status quo as a point of departure, rather than as a site of interrogation and critical engagement. Rather, the 'flesh' invites us to rethink the categories (state, agency, power, resistance, etc.) that incipiently regulate our research projects, discipline and exclude our subjects of research, and foreclose questions. In the words of Harney & Moten (2013, p. 48), it is to account for the lives that persist "under the sign and weight of a closed question."

To conclude, unlike bare life, which is representative of many of the shortcomings within the field of refugee studies, the **flesh** helps us recognize the interstitial positionality of refugees vis-à-vis the "national order of things" (Malkki, 1995) It therefore conceives of the nation-state not as a site of a**ppeal** but as a site of i**nterrogation.** To put it in a question, if bare lives, refugees in this case, do indeed embody a double condition—that of living outside of Western sovereignty and enduring its most brutal manifestations, all while holding this sovereignty together—does not this positionality (of being Western sovereignty's other) accord them a particularly subversive potential? Would not this positionality respond to Amiri Baraka (1995, p. 8) concern when he once, perhaps ironically, stated that "the idea that Western thought might be exotic if viewed from another landscape never presents itself to most Westerners"?

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[4]Here, I am referring to attempts within the field to advocate for a neoliberal agency for refugees that allows for a marketization of the space of the refugee camp. This includes attempts to advocate for humanitarian innovation (for more, see Betts and Bloom (2014) on humanitarian innovation and refugee protection). There is a need to reassess our use of agency as a category, but such attempts perpetuate political, economic, and social structures that intensify trends of forced migration and political and economic inequalities.

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What Does a Humane Infrastructure for Research Look Like?

Estella Carpi

ABSTRACT

In this intervention, I make two main suggestions to humanize refugee research. First, the tendency to select "research hot spots" as field sites—where researchers tend to approach the same interviewees and spaces—should not only be called out and avoided but battled against. Second, I suggest that refugee research should collaborate directly with other studies of social, political, and economic phenomena not in an effort to make displacement the sine qua non for doing research but, instead, only one of the many conditions a human being can inhabit within receiving societies. Pursuing this aim will be easier when studies on forced migration do not become compartmentalized and develop in isolation from other disciplines and research groups.

KEYWORDS

refugee research; humanization; ethics; research hot spots; interdisciplinary research; migration studies

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette intervention, je fais deux suggestions principales pour humaniser la recherche sur les réfugiés. Premièrement, la tendance à choisir des «points chauds» comme terrains de recherche - où les chercheur.es approchent souvent les mêmes répondant.es et les mêmes espaces - doit être non seulement dénoncée et évitée, mais aussi combattue. Deuxièmement, je suggère que la recherche sur les réfugiés devrait s'effectuer en collaboration directe avec d'autres champs d'études portant sur des phénomènes sociaux, politiques et économiques afin d'éviter de faire du déplacement la condition sine qua non de la recherche, mais plutôt l'une des nombreuses conditions qu'un être humain peut vivre au sein des sociétés d'accueil. La poursuite de cet objectif sera plus facile si les études sur la migration forcée ne se compartimentent pas et ne se développent pas en vase clos par rapport aux autres disciplines et groupes de recherche.

KEYWORDS

refugee research; humanization; ethics; research hot spots; interdisciplinary research; migration studies

INTRODUCTION

Humanizing research conducted by humans on humankind sounds like a paradox, yet it requires great effort. Thinking of ourselves as human researchers is certainly the first step to take. Indeed, while the broad and vague concept of "research" is adopted in international debates with the purpose of depersonalizing the discourse (e.g., Block et al., 2013; Clark-Kazak, 2019) from my perspective, we instead need to re-individualize such

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"universal" efforts. Also, in order for these efforts to be effective, we should reframe ethical responsibility in academic research as researcher-focused. This means dwelling upon the sort of researchers we currently are. For instance, the researcher's sensitivity and respectfulness are not necessarily associated with so-called research excellence or scientific rigor. Ethics, in fact, are not only an institutional code we need to comply with to carry out field research but, more importantly, need to be translated into an intimate process of self-inquiry. The latter, in turn, involves intellectual honesty to keep ourselves open to the critical reflections that our peers also advance. To humanize research, in other words, we need to make substantial room for a form of criticism started by peers—a form that often becomes overestimated in the broader framework of self-reflexive methods—that we start ourselves, as well as others do. For example, self-reflexivity mainly revolves around the researcher's positionality and access to the research field (e.g., autoethnography is a perfect case in point, where the "extension of the self" serves to emphasize and understand the "other" rather than criticizing ourselves; see Foley, 2002, p. 473). In today's global research scene, since guaranteeing research excellence and success has become paramount for both institutions and individuals to survive financially, researchers are increasingly subject to the global politics of showcasing success in their constant race for funding. This leaves little room for genuine self-criticism.

In light of these considerations, refugee and humanitarian scholars have increasingly questioned the ethics of international research conducted in areas characterized by crisis and vulnerability. For example, over the last two decades, field researchers have increasingly dismissed the practice of speaking **on behalf of** subalterns and refugees and instead embraced first-person storytelling as a way to give them direct voice in a bid to emphasize—and, at times, even romanticize—refugee agency and empowerment. In the current academic era, the act of acknowledging and learning from refugees' agency and resilience is surely valuable. However, with continuous invitations being advanced in the international community of scholars to humanize research and to prioritize ethics in diversely vulnerable settings, refugee agency is problematically becoming tokenistic, used to parade ethical research: valuing and empowering refugee voices but, at the same time, capitalizing on refugeehood as a fixed research category. When concepts such as **humanization** and **decolonization** become omnipresent buzzwords while we witness slow changes, it becomes difficult to believe in the materialization of genuine radical endeavors that can finally end refugeehood and refugees' lack of rights worldwide. As a result, more effective strategies of research aimed at radical transformation—that is able to disrupt academic hegemonies of knowledge production and that does not merely let the subaltern speak, echoing Gayatri Spivak (1988)—need to be developed. In fact, representation has yet not withered away in academic writing, and efforts towards innovative collective forms of researching and writing are still insufficient.

It is in this context, where "human research" has dangerously become tokenized, that I would like to make my intervention. I have two main suggestions to help us, researchers, think through the humanization of refugee research. First, the tendency to select "research hot spots" as field sites—where researchers tend to approach the same interviewees and spaces—should

not only be called out and avoided but battled against. Second, I suggest that refugee research should collaborate directly with other studies of social, political, and economic phenomena not in an effort to make displacement the sine qua non for doing research but, instead, only one of the many conditions a human being can inhabit within receiving societies. Building on Bakewell's (2008) argument, I believe that pursuing this aim will be easier when studies on forced migration do not become compartmentalized and develop in isolation from other disciplines and research groups.

ON RESEARCH "HOT SPOTS"

Foreign—and sometimes even local—researchers who study refugees tend to address the same geographical areas, speak to the same people, and rely on the same networks and information sources to verify evidence. Embracing this definition of over-research, I am conscious that **over-research** is by no means a monolithic concept, but it can rather be linked to disparate positions and perspectives between different stakeholders in the research interaction, and, as such, it can imply different meanings (Koen et al., 2017). The tendency to rely on pre-existing research "hot spots" is the product of today's global need to guarantee rapid, safe, and smooth access to field sites where politics are particularly controversial and personal security is endangered. As some scholars have observed (e.g., Pascucci, 2017), especially in cases where refugee research is conducted in countries other than one's own, the phenomenon of over-research, which "leads to some places and people being far more researched than others" , is produced by relying on identical "infrastructures" of access and, often, linguistic translation (Pascucci, 2017, p. 249). Pascucci provides the example of the Cairo metropolitan area, on which most non-Arabic-speaking refugee scholars focus. This segment of scholars tends to rely on the same aid agencies in order to access refugees in Egypt and conduct their fieldwork. The Shatila refugee camp, in the southern suburbs of Lebanon's capital Beirut, offers a similar example (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013), where Palestinian community representatives and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) generally gatekeep the area and with whom external researchers—often implicitly—need to negotiate their presence.

Importantly, the issue of over-research in refugee communities may generate faulty methodologies, both scientifically and ethically. The same individuals or groups are accessed and sampled, and data are collected from the same social strata, regions, neighborhoods, cities, and political groups. Researchers routinely need to consider issues of sample representativeness, partiality of data, and over-focus on specific communities or themes. While these are unavoidable difficulties with any methodology, over-research can amplify them. As investigated (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013), over-researched communities are generally viewed as advantaged by local people who are based in other areas, as they ensure their spot on the agenda of policy-makers; but they are also vulnerable, as over-research turns community members into commodities of international "consumption" and whose performance informs academic studies (Bouris, 2007; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013) also point out that over-researched areas can become objects of international development research but not necessarily objects of concrete improvement. The case of Shatila is again emblematic. In this vein, as scholars have discussed (e.g., Ali, 2013; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013), visits by international researchers, who rarely carry

out long-term fieldwork or repeated field revisits over time, often create expectations and promises of social change among politically and economically vulnerable communities when, in fact, these populations have frequently voiced their alienation from research questions and outcomes (Ali, 2013; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013).

Similarly, in the wake of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011, researchers shifted their geographical focus from Beirut to the north of Lebanon (e.g., the Lebanese region of Akkar and the city of Tripoli), which seems to have become the new Shatila. In fact, unlike southern Lebanon, where political surveillance by the Amal Movement and Hezbollah political parties make research more uncomfortable and arduous, northern Lebanon is considered more accessible and less risky.[1] In today's refugee scholarship, other emerging research hot spots are the Syrian refugee camp Za'tari in northern Jordan and European cities of migration entry such as Athens, where researchers can explore transit strategies and migrants' decision-making. In a nutshell, these places are increasingly populated by international researchers, but their basic infrastructures, such as potable water, electricity, and housing conditions, are reported as unlikely to improve (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2013). In this sense, academic over-research becomes a synonym for exploitation.

In refugee studies, the tendency of researchers to be based in comfortable and relatively safe areas while studying the effects of crisis is common, giving rise to what have been called **zones de confort** (DiPeri & Carpi, 2011). Lebanon and Jordan emerged as comfort zones to look at displacement from Syria, just as Tunisia became a comfort zone to look at the crisis in Libya. In all of these contexts, international and local NGOs or associations are likely to act as gatekeepers and facilitators: their presence, at times, becomes an encouraging factor for researchers who prefer scoping out all potential sources of information and networks before electing the field site, thus discarding improvisation. Some NGOs, in fact, can provide accommodation and support to researchers, and sometimes even temporary collaboration opportunities, which benefit the researchers' understanding of the field sites. Safety, indeed, is not the only pull factor for conducting research in such hot spots; ease and speed of access are also important, especially for those pursuing short-term research endeavors and facing pressure to produce output within unreasonable time frames. That said, I do not intend to suggest that we, as field-based researchers, need to venture in dangerous zones with no measures in place; but we should look beyond such research hot spots and, therefore, base our fieldwork considerations on premises able to counter over-research.

In order to avoid and battle against the creation of such research hot spots and against the "bunkerization" of academic research as a way of reducing risk (Duffield, 2012), I advocate for greater familiarization with the areas of research before working on them. Pilot periods, indeed, should not merely be aimed at testing interview questions and the suitability and empirical relevance of research tools. Rather, pilot periods should also familiarize researchers with the local literature on the area, the research priorities suggested by local inhabitants, and, of particular importance, the local ethics of research, which are largely ignored in global discussions. Indeed, in English-speaking academia, the way in which research is seen as ethical, most of the time, refers not to the context researched but, instead, to a standardized, bureaucratic practice of ethics clearance and an interdisciplinary practice (Krause, 2017). Develop-

ing methodologies that make room for our own learning of vernacular research ethics should become a priority. This does not necessarily imply the need to spend long periods in the field, which has been acknowledged to be extremely difficult (Gunel et al., 2009). Instead, it can imply that we should invest more time in understanding a place, even in a series of short visits. Ultimately, encouraging colleagues and students to look beyond these research hot spots—and obviously avoiding them ourselves—while also attributing greater importance to field revisits would constitute important steps towards the humanization of refugee research and the re-individualization of these efforts. However, in this respect, institutional constraints cannot go unheeded. A political economy in which an academic career needs to be strongly focused on publication records certainly requires researchers to publish quickly, preventing them from investing time and resources in field revisits. In other words, a larger struggle, which falls out the scope of this article, would need to take place before such choices are likely to be made.

ON DEFINING RESEARCH ENVIRONMENTS

In addition, we should rethink the institutional environment that can properly host, inform, and materially support our research. The choice of the environment, whether formal or informal, can either accommodate or challenge the very effort to humanize research. I here discuss the possibilities for an ideal environment by challenging the use of identity politics as a point of departure, further nuancing the efforts of previous scholars who enquired into the meaning of **migration studies** (e.g., Monsutti, 2010 who posits migration as going beyond from-place-to-place trajectories). If we consider the genealogy of university departments and research institutes that have a "refugee section," different knowledge disciplines have defined most of these environments, with the result, at times, of cementing perspectives and debates within their own boundaries. For example, in the field of religion-driven development, which I am personally concerned with, the debates mainly revolve around political concerns on providers' neutrality and proselytism, thus primarily approaching religion as a potential bias (Carpi & Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020): a theory to either endorse or discard. Such debates could instead be reoriented around the ways in which ethics, politics, or economics inform religion-driven development activities. The frequent compartmentalization of debates into disciplinary boxes has also happened in cases of informal groups of scholars focusing on refugee-related issues, such as anthropologists and sociologists. Moreover, as discussed in the workshop focused on interdisciplinarity, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)'s Partnership for Conflict, Crime & Security Research (PaCCS)[1], held at University College London in September 2017, refugee studies scholars are not necessarily trained in any specific discipline, or they are hastily placed under a broad and vague field labelled as sociology. Nonetheless, substantial efforts to build research networks and contents on interdisciplinary grounds have recently been made (e.g., Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020; Triandafyllidou, 2016).

Where, then, should our research be located? Academic dissatisfaction with "area studies" is also on the rise, with the cri-

[1]The partnership included 28 interdisciplinary research projects.

tique that grouping studies and scholars on the basis of specific regions risks making each of these regions exceptional rather than unique. For instance, the Middle East, producing the largest number of conflict-caused displacements worldwide (Tejel and Öztan, 2020, p. 6), has long been approached as an exceptional region for its conflictual "nature" and too often reduced to confessional understandings of society as well as conflict motivated by ethnicity or religion.

Similarly, identity-based departments (e.g., refugee studies, women's studies, or Muslim studies), from my perspective, may fossilize around aprioristic categories of analysis, making research subjects instrumental. As researchers exploring refugeehood, looking at contexts of vulnerability means developing a holistic gaze on different subjects, such as migrants, chronic poor, children, the elderly, or other individualities that are not easily grouped into classically vulnerable categories. In my view, as researchers, we should always keep our eyes wide open to the subjects that come to our attention, rather than defining the scope of research subjects at the outset. In other words, studies revolving around identity categories such as **women**, **migrants**, or **Muslims**, by definition, discourage the researcher from delving into the multi-faceted significance of particular human processes and do not always work as a foundational basis upon which to investigate such significance.

In sum, departing from the mere normative definition of refugeehood and social categories in general to undertake research may turn into a theoretical trap, as mentioned above, as well as into conservative politics. In fact, while the initial purpose of the researcher whose work centers on refugees as a clear-cut category may be the acknowledgement of refugee rights and their difference from unforced migrant rights, an overemphasis on a clear-cut categorization sometimes can contribute to crystallizing divisions between "undesirable" refugees and "desired" state subjects, such as economic migrants or citizens.

These mainstream narratives are often the result of the media's influence and end up dominating the way in which we convey our refugee-focused research, insofar as approaches predefined by identity categories neglect the importance of "conceptual narrativity" (a notion introduced by Somers, 1992), that is, the importance of making our research base on "social concepts that can embrace historicity, time, and space" (p. 594). In light of these considerations, the contribution of the institutional environment in the humanization of research is fundamental. Indeed, the environment can accommodate, enrich, challenge, or bury knowledge and narratives. And academic and media narratives on refugeehood, on the one hand, and some commodified forms of refugee storytelling, where refugees themselves are asked to tell their own stories, on the other (see, e.g., Bouris, 2007), lie at the core of the formation of social identities within host societies, as well as of the establishment of a global parlance on refugees used by the media and a variety of political and social actors.

In similar ways, even though it tends to build on an interdisciplinary foundation, something like "refugee studies" tends to group research by a single, determinant, analytical category, such as "refugees." Working within categories leads us to consider the research subjects as aprioristic, even in settings where, for example, human mobility and the forceful nature of flight may be less able to capture local forms of vulnerability or other human circumstances. Furthermore, working within categories, to some

extent, may contribute to the compartmentalization of refugees and refugee-related issues in receiving societies rather than help to build strong connections between crisis, refugeehood, normal welfare, and the functioning of societies outside of crisis. It is possible to notice this type of effort when, for instance, we use social class as a primary identity marker or for intersectional analysis on forced migrants (Maqul et al., 2021) rather than ethnicity and religion, which, instead, typically define conflict. The current securitization, medicalization, and criminalization of refugees—according to which, respectively, refugees are viewed as security threats, trauma-affected subjects to be healed, or criminals in host countries—are strong examples of research predefined by well-bounded identity categories. This is particularly the case when research is funded by political actors, who build on such categories to make policies.

In light of this, which sort of hybrid environments should we endeavor to build and support to encourage scholars from disparate settings to come together, bringing their peculiar approaches? Interdisciplinarity can seemingly pull together diverse human approaches to research and, indeed, is increasingly encouraged and funded. Can something like "migration departments" work? On the one hand, the thematic definition of research environments can limit the exploration of the theme itself, as it somehow polices its boundaries. On the other hand, it appears as a more viable option than identity-predefined environments, disciplines, or area studies, as it offers adequate means to address migration broadly and nuancedly, in a complex and intersectional way, placing it in conversation with other societal factors. By this token, in the specific case of migration-focused studies, establishing institutional environments by theme helps us contextualize the peculiar condition of different arrays of migrants and even advocate for a more responsive (and articulated) rights' regime. By the way of conclusion, while this intervention may far from provide straightforward solutions, with it, I suggest that reflecting on these issues as global research communities can generate concrete possibilities for transformational research and our own humanization.

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Demarcating Boundaries: Against the "Humanitarian Embrace"

Hanno Brankamp

ABSTRACT

Recent years have seen renewed calls for bridging the "gap" between the worlds of policy-makers, humanitarian practitioners, and researchers in the social sciences and humanities. This has resulted in a growth of partnerships between academics, aid organizations, governments, and businesses with the aim of joining forces to help those in need. In this paper, I respond critically to these developments and question the seemingly commonsensical logic behind attempts to forge ever-closer collaborations across institutional boundaries. I argue that the humanitarian arena, despite its heterogeneity, is by no means a level playing field in which the meanings, power structures, and practices of aid are ever truly "open" for negotiation. Bridging divides has often served as a way of consolidating the institutional and epistemic hegemony of humanitarian actors and inadvertently delegitimized critical scholarship seeking more structural change. Scholars in refugee and forced migration studies have hereby been engulfed in a tightening "humanitarian embrace." I contend that in order to fulfill a more radical scholarly commitment to social justice, anti-violence, and equality, it is time to demarcate the boundaries between institutionalized humanitarianism and politically engaged, slow, and insurgent forms of research that centre solidarity with marginalized, racialized, encamped, and displaced migrants themselves. Towards this end, I propose infiltration, slow scholarship, and accompaniment as alternative methodologies for research in humanitarian spaces.

KEYWORDS

humanization; humanitarianism; partnerships; critical scholarship; refugee studies; solidarity; power

RESUMÉ

Dans les dernières années, des appels renouvelés en faveur du rapprochement entre le monde des décideurs politiques, des travailleurs humanitaires et des chercheurs en sciences humaines et sociales se sont fait entendre. Cela a conduit à une croissance des partenariats entre les universitaires, les organisations humanitaires, les gouvernements et les entreprises, qui ont uni leurs forces afin de venir en aide aux personnes dans le besoin. Cet article adresse une réponse critique à ces développements et remet en question la logique derrière ces tentatives de forger des partenariats de plus en plus étroits par-delà les frontières institutionnelles. Il soutient que le domaine humanitaire, malgré son hétérogénéité, n'est en aucun cas un terrain équitable où les significations, les structures de pouvoir et les pratiques d'aide humanitaire sont vraiment «ouvertes» à la négociation. Les tentatives de rapprochement ont souvent servi à consolider l'hégémonie institutionnelle et épistémique des acteurs humanitaires et a eu pour effet de délégitimer la recherche critique visant des changements structurels. Les chercheurs en études des réfugiés et de la migration forcée se retrouvent ainsi pris dans une «étreinte humanitaire» de plus en plus serrée. Cet article soutient qu'afin de remplir un engagement plus radical en faveur de la justice sociale, de la non-violence et de l'égalité, il est temps de délimiter les frontières entre l'humanitarisme institutionnalisé et la recherche politiquement engagée, lente et insurrectionnelle priorisant la solidarité avec les migrants marginalisés, racisés, mis en camps ou déplacés eux-mêmes. À cette fin, je propose l'infiltration, la recherche lente et l'accompagnement comme méthodologies de recherche alternatives dans les espaces humanitaires.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen renewed calls for bridging the "gap" between the worlds of policy-makers, humanitarian practitioners, and researchers in the social sciences and humanities (Betts & Collier, 2018; Fast, 2017; Sandvik, 2017). The encounters between academics and humanitarians are hereby often caricatured as a clash of **practical** knowledge with **detached** theories, only to be resolved through intensified collaborations. The value of such liaisons is reiterated in publications, grant applications, workshops, and conferences and is explicitly encouraged by funding bodies (DFID, 2011; ELRHA, 2012). Proposals for partnerships also follow on the heels of other demands to overcome a smorgasbord of wider schisms between global and local actors, the public and private sectors, governments and non-governmental organizations, as well as humanitarian assistance and development. Writing about the nascent links between aid organizations and business, former United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees. Sadako Ogata (2000, p. 170) observed 20 years ago, somewhat prophetically, that we may indeed "live in an era of experimentation in partnerships." Debates on the desirability, benefits, and potential drawbacks of collaboration between differentially resourced and situated actors are therefore not new, especially those focusing on disparities in North–South research networks (Bradley, 2008; Landau, 2012; Zingerli, 2010) and international development (Stevens et al., 2013).

Here my focus is specifically on partnerships and institutional entanglements within what is sometimes characterized as the "ecosystem" of global humanitarianism (Betts & Bloom, 2014): the ensemble of agents and organizations loosely connected by their shared involvement in the morally inflected governance of emergency, disaster, and displacement. Hilhorst and Jansen (2010, p. 1120) conceive of this space as an "arena" where miscellaneous actors compete for influence, deploy material and immaterial resources, and thus negotiate how aid is practised. However, in this paper, I argue that the humanitarian arena, despite its heterogeneity, is by no means a level playing field in which the meanings, power structures, and practices of aid are ever truly "open" for negotiation. More precisely, I question the commonsensical assumption that close co-operation between researchers and aid agencies, corporate partners, and policy-makers is necessarily desirable or likely to benefit the long-term welfare and life goals of displaced people and others living under the humanitarian regime. Rather, growing bonds risks not only consolidating the hegemony of humanitarian agencies over the categories and priorities of research (Bakewell, 2008), and reinforcing their control of material resources and funds, but may ultimately streamline and depoliticize the ways in which social research in aid contexts is being conducted. Proximity to corridors of humanitarian power and their corporate affiliates reproduces narrow sets of ideas and self-referential knowledge that can neither hold powerful institutions to account nor adequately engage with the political struggles of those affected by aid governance. I rather heuristically refer to this encroachment of institutional logics, values, discursive frames, solutions, and infrastructures on research engagements with/among refugees and forced migrants as the **humanitarian embrace**.

While academic institutions are themselves equally deeply implicated in upholding inequalities through a Eurocentric geopolitics of global knowledge production on "forced migration" and "aid" (Chimni, 2009;

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020), and socially produce the managerial class that runs aid organizations, critical scholarship still has the potential to challenge and disrupt these established circuits of power. This paper argues that to achieve this, we must work towards demarcating the boundaries between institutionalized humanitarianism and more politically engaged, slow, action-based, and insurgent forms of research that centre solidarity with marginalized, racialized, encamped, and displaced migrants in their dealings with the aid machinery. After characterizing the humanitarian embrace, I propose infiltration, slow scholarship, and accompaniment as three potential strategies to do so in practice. Countering the influence of humanitarian institutions and logics is not an innocent call to reinforce exclusionary academic knowledges instead but to imagine alternative ways of researching against the grain of aid institutions.

CHARACTERIZING THE "HUMANITARIAN EMBRACE"

Researchers studying forced migration and humanitarianism have reflected more carefully on their positionality, ethical responsibility, and unequal power relations vis-à-vis refugees (Clark-Kazak, 2017; Krause, 2017; Lammers, 2007; Mackenzie et al., 2007) than on their relationship with aid organizations, despite a long methodological concern for "studying up" (Hyndman, 2000). This is surprising as humanitarian spaces are administered by power-laden infrastructures of care that include a mixture of aid and state agencies that regulate and monitor levels of access afforded to academics (Pascucci, 2017). Humanitarian channels of mobility, transport, security, communication, accommodation, and sociality are often key in facilitating the presence and comfort of researchers, regardless of their structural critiques of aid intervention (Smirl, 2008). Information sharing, everyday co-operation, socialization, and somewhat "embedded" research approaches are common pragmatic choices to gain access. However, the growing professionalization of "field visits"[1] for donor delegations, journalists, rights advocates, consultants, humanitarians, private contractors, and academics under the aegis of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has also further blurred already thin lines between different forms of engagement. Understandably, for many refugees and forced migrants themselves who inhabit intensely visited locations like camps or other aid spaces, distinctions between researchers and humanitarians are often impossible to make. After all, researchers actively shape, and are shaped by, the arena of humanitarian intervention and its racialized mobilities. At the same time, visible slippages between aid networks and those who follow in their wake are often surface-level expressions of humanitarianism's deeper currents as a site of particular moral politics and reasoning.

Beyond its incarnation in aid organizations, humanitarianism operates as a "liberal diagnostic" that identifies problems and discursively frames suitable solutions to determine "how those who suffer today are to be thought about" (Reid-Henry, 2014, p. 426). Thus, it mobilizes a dual logic of organizational efficiency and a liberal will-to-care that reproduces the Western-centric political order from which it has sprung. Humanitarianism is a site of institutional politics of compassion, as well as

[1] For example, UNHCR Kenya has produced official "visitor guides" for the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps, including "sightseeing," suggestions for "souvenirs," and lists of local fixers who can deliver "the right" informants for a particular piece of research or news article.

an epistemic community that spans various organizations and political processes imbued with its rationalities, be it refugee protection, domestic poverty relief, immigration, military interventions, or policing of urban violence (Fassin, 2011; Reid-Henry & Sending, 2014; Ticktin, 2011; Weizman, 2011). Sociologists speak in similar terms of "institutional isomorphism" when organizations and actors in a particular environment progressively adopt resembling structures and norms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Mackay et al., 2009) but at the same time risk "becoming entrapped in a self-referential knowledge creating machine" (De Waal, 2015, para. 2). Zingerli (2010, p. 219) cautions that joining collaboration in a field dominated by powerful institutions inevitably imposes their values and rules with which other partners tend to comply. In studies on forced migration and humanitarianism, there is a tendency among some academics to uncritically adopt "categories, concepts and priorities of policy makers and practitioners" (Bakewell, 2008, p. 432; Skilbrei, 2020). In extreme cases, aid organizations can even leverage their position to "pre-screen" research projects for their "benefit" to both refugees and their own operational demands (Pascucci, 2017).

Thus, the humanitarian embrace exceeds the practical reliance of academics on the facilitative aid infrastructures "in the field." Rather, it encompasses rationalities, questions and modes of thought imparted by well-positioned actors in the ecosystem of humanitarian aid. Recent appeals for bridging gaps between academics and practitioners inadvertently exacerbate this encroachment by dismissing particularly critical social scientists, who aim to craft independent and conceptually informed critiques of power structures that underpin the aid industry as overly theory-focused, "esoteric or idealistic" (Betts & Collier, 2018, p. xiv), or even "completely out of touch with reality" on the ground (Ferris, 2012, p. 578). This reductive depiction follows a wider idealization of so-called pracademics (Stevens et al., 2013), who traverse the academic and policy worlds, speak multiple organizational "languages," and, crucially, move from uncomfortable "problem-raising" to institutionally supported "problem-solving" approaches (Skilbrei, 2020, p. 562; Bakewell, 2008). Meanwhile, insistence on policy relevance, direct impact, and institutionally legible forms of knowledge has often made disciplinary discourses in refugee and forced migration studies themselves complicit in legitimizing the containment and epistemic ring-fencing of racialized southern refugees in the geopolitical interests of Global North countries (Chimni, 1998, 2009). Academic–humanitarian partnerships are always entangled in these complex power relations, yet they usually expect mutual gains in credibility, data access, impact, and ability to test theories under the sanguine premise "that there can be a greater impact by joining forces" (ELRHA, 2012, p. 13).

The latest articulations of this long-standing belief in collaboration are discourses on "humanitarian innovation" that emphasize merits of market economic thinking and tech solutionism as ideal-type models for aid (Betts & Bloom, 2014). The groundwork for this was laid in part during Sadako Ogata's stint at the helm of UNHCR, when she proclaimed that businesses and humanitarians are bound to partner up in a shared quest for prosperity, sustainability, and security while "helping those in need" (Ogata, 2000, p. 167). Scott-Smith recognizes this long engagement of humanitarians with market dynamics and logics but contends that the recent turn towards "innovation" has even further obscured distinctions between aid agendas, corporate interests, and state

machineries (2016, p. 2233).

While not emblematic for all existing partnerships in the field, the innovation trend has complicated academic–practitioner relationships as the humanitarian embrace itself has increasingly been defined by a focus on refugee resilience, mitigation, management, and the use of "creative models of institutional design" (Betts & Collier, 2018, p. 10) rather than identifying structural inequalities and global capitalism as the preventable root causes of displacement. Therefore, innovation is not unique but reflective of a wider systemic shift from a humanitarianism focused on emergencies to one that readily accepts crisis as a "new normality" to be efficiently managed (Hilhorst, 2018, p. 5). Critical social researchers experience the pressures of these institutional tendencies in the form of incomprehension at their lack of appetite for cozying up to neither humanitarian bureaucracies nor corporate partners. This sensitively shapes the conditions in which research takes place but also generates exciting opportunities for methodological disobedience.

DEMARCATING BOUNDARIES: INFILTRATION, SLOW SCHOLARSHIP, ACCOMPANIMENT

Given the tenacity of the humanitarian embrace, there is a growing need to demarcate, and not macerate, the boundaries between institutionalized aid and critical scholarly inquiries. While tightening bonds between researchers, humanitarians, and corporate businesses may in theory seem mutually beneficial, these bonds disproportionately serve those who wield the most power in the form of financial, political, and institutional resources. Refugees are, at best, celebrated as "resilient" partners and participants, though their role is often circumscribed by limited powers to actually set agendas, mobilize resources, or meaningfully influence decision-making (Ilcan & Rygiel, 2015; Brankamp, 2018; Turner, 2020). Meanwhile, critical research on migration and aid time again highlights the enduring coloniality, racism, and epistemic erasures of academic practices in studying or "producing knowledge" about people governed through humanitarian administration (Benton, 2016; Chimni, 2009; Pailey, 2020). While alternative methodologies are too numerous to be comprehensively exposed here, I sketch three interrelated "subversive acts of scholarship" (Pailey, 2020, p. 736) that may guide this insurgent work within humanitarian spaces: **infiltration**, **slow scholarship**, and **accompaniment**. Together, these methodological acts aim to affirm scholarly commitments to social justice, anti-violence, and equality and to question privileged "partnerships" that risk depoliticizing and streamlining research and preclude more grounded solidarities with the struggles of displaced communities themselves.

Critical feminist anthropologists have long advocated for "studying up" to analyze the inner workings of institutions and power structures and their effects on the people they govern (Billo & Mountz, 2016; Nader, 1972). Priyadharshini writes that "the more closely we engage with power, the closer we come to examining our own reflections in the powerful and even our own complicities as we go about producing knowledge" (2003, p. 434). A host of studies has focused on the everyday governmental powers of humanitarian and immigration bureaucracies to discipline, organize, and make the bodies of "sufferers" and migrants legible (Farah, 2020; Hyndman, 2000; Ticktin, 2011). Extrapolating from Ann L. Stoler (2009), studying up thereby always requires reading both **against** and **along** the grain

of institutions and powerful bureaucracies. "Reading against the grain" means turning these institutions' and bureaucracies' hegemonic discourses, narratives, and practices upside down to reveal the silences and epistemic casualties, while "reading along the grain" makes visible the granular—and often unexpected—contradictions within the networks of power themselves (Stoler, 2009, pp. 47, 53; Simon, 1992). Research in the humanitarian arena can productively employ similar tactics to analyze and confront the hierarchized logics of aid institutions and their continuous encroachment on other social spaces.

Education scholar DeLeon (2012, p. 314) proposes a "politics of infiltration" as insurgent methodology. Complementing the necessity to "study up" institutional hierarchies with a will to resist their exploitative workings, he argues that privileged access to the corridors of power can be usefully harnessed for "creating, finding and exploiting 'cracks"' within the system itself (p. 313). "Infiltration" constitutes a highly embodied way of engaging powerful actors and institutions through often stealthy, playful, and disobedient forms of research that excavate and register dynamics of power as well as performatively disrupting them while still being embedded within them. The fact that many researchers have recognizable symbolic capital and careers that are commensurate to those of aid workers, yet have more freedom for systemic analysis, enhances their capacity to infiltrate privileged spaces, unearth their injustices, and bring into view the underlying operations of power (Madison, 2012). However, "infiltrating" spaces of aid is, perhaps counterintuitively, not about spying, disguise, and clandestine operations, but rather utilizes the tightening humanitarian embrace and embeddedness as a "crack" to critically interrogate institutional realities of aid governance from within. This renders infiltration a methodological compromise that exploits the privilege often afforded to researchers as part of their participation in circuits of humanitarian power to subvert these very structures and ultimately work towards their undoing.

Relatedly, the promise of efficiency, technological solutions, and mutual gain from academic–humanitarian partnerships has impacts on availability and valuation of time. Managing refugees involves use of biopolitical technologies to order and assess the bodies, biographies, mobilities, and needs of the displaced (Hyndman, 2000). Humanitarianism is hence both a system of emergency resource distribution and acts as "a machine that elicits and administers testimonies" (Guilhot, 2012, p. 90). More often than not, refugees are expected to disclose intimate details of their flight histories, injuries, health conditions, and vulnerabilities to humanitarian bureaucrats in exchange for statuses, recognition, material benefits, and sometimes paths to resettlement in a third country. Researchers seeking easy, safe, and quick access to "refugee experiences" in humanitarian settings are partly able to do so because of this enabling social environment in which "stories" are a form of currency (Pittaway et al., 2010). Infrastructures of aid have become a key (and often the only) means of accessing people on the move in a time-efficient and economized manner, rendering their life stories a sought-after commodity. Defying this extractive yet enabling capacity of the humanitarian embrace is often difficult, especially given similarly productivity-centred logics in contemporary academia. Yet the deliberate deceleration of research is methodologically useful and has potential to radically subvert power hierarchies while imagining alternative ways of **doing** research.

Recent calls for "slow scholarship" (Mountz et al., 2015) as a radical alternative to compressed and oppressive time regimes of neoliberal education are instructive here. The widening movement for **slowing down** academic labor stresses the benefits and necessity of engaging carefully, thoughtfully, thoroughly, and more equitably with ideas, fields, and each other (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Kuus, 2015; Martell, 2014; Shahjahan, 2015). The descriptor **slow** is decidedly not only about reversing accelerating time regimes but also positively challenging relations of power that are easily reproduced through such modes of research (Martell, 2014). Slowing scholarship in the humanitarian arena aims to rethink and reorganize power terrains linked to the minimal time budgets within the humanitarian economy. Recognizing the limits of time investment in a knowledge economy with rising expectations (Mills & Ratcliffe, 2012), time-intensive and deliberate scholarship in aid contexts is becoming increasingly difficult to pursue. Kuus suggests that analyzing social processes always entails uncertainty and ambiguity, is time-consuming, and "cannot rely on a ready-made conceptual or methodological toolbox" (2015, p. 839). Here, the boundary that slow scholarship demarcates is between temporal disposability and deeper, more meaningful, and reciprocal engagements over time. Yet slowing down research, and working in spite of oppressive aid efficiency logics, can only succeed if a shared understanding is fostered between researchers and the inhabitants of aid spaces that long-term social change is readily attainable not through institutional "fixes" but rather political struggles. Gilmore reminds us that only with patience can theories and practices circulate, enter into true dialogue, and enable people "to see problems and their solutions differently" (2007, p. 243).

My last point builds on this attempt to **see** and **research** differently, against the odds of the humanitarian embrace. Freire's idea of "liberation education" (1993) is useful here as it critiques conventional knowledge economies for treating students as "containers" in which scholars "deposit" knowledge and reproduce existing hierarchies of power rather than challenging them. Instead, he states, "knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1993, p. 45). While this may at first sight justify calls for closer "partnerships" and bridging "gaps," it also implies that not just **any** partnership will do. Humanitarian agencies may be nominally receptive to inputs from refugee communities and social researchers, and thus depart from logics of social engineering, but continue to hinge on the premise that displacements and disasters are to be mitigated and managed but not solved by addressing the structural violence of imperialism and capitalism. Institutionalized humanitarianism continues to be an exercise of domination and unequal valuation of life, which, in Freire's words, "serves to obviate thinking" (1993, p. 49; Fassin, 2011).

Strategies of accompaniment may offer inroads for disobedient methodologies, alternative forms of research, and dialogical co-production of knowledge and struggle (Bejarano et al., 2019; Madison, 2012; Tomlinson & Lipsitz, 2013). Here, the workings of power need not be "unearthed" because those affected by them are well aware of injustices and unfreedom. For Fischlin and colleagues, "accompaniment envisions political action as a journey taken together" and may therefore work "best when it engages people in unpredictable and ephemeral yet meaningful acts of listening

and sharing" (2013, p. 235). These deliberate acts of togetherness, solidarity, listening, and mutual recognition are crucial in humanitarian settings characterized by the inequality of care, hierarchies of humanity, depoliticized intervention, and the perpetual diffusion of humanitarian logics. While it does not preclude or resolve the contradictions between the "researchers" and "researched" per se, accompaniment can contribute to opening up spaces of possibility for more "syncretic analytical practices that join disparate struggles, people, and places" (Mei-Singh, 2020, p. 76). Intentionally working alongside displaced communities in humanitarian contexts aims to avoid replicating well-rehearsed forms of domination that forfeit the potential for emancipatory change. This can be a tedious, slow, and open-ended process of learning and building stronger relationships but ultimately produces better and more critical analyses (Tomlinson & Lipsitz, 2013).

This work of doing collaborative research otherwise starts by making studies more intelligible to the people with and among whom the research is conducted (Waal, 2015) or by paying attention to existing political dissent and struggles, and actively supporting them (Olivius, 2017; Smith, 2015). Rather than representing a ready-made methodology, this is an ongoing and, ultimately, uncertain effort to combine research with political action and worldmaking as it enacts the very relationships that it seeks to build. Accompanying people under humanitarian control is a messy, drawn-out process that seeks to eventually substitute managerial logics of humanitarian assistance with solidarity and recognition of the ongoing violence of humanitarianism. Challenging harmful systems of compassion and their asymmetrical relations of power, which are part of any dispensation of aid, is only possible if critical scholarship joins displaced communities in their everyday struggles to challenge this oppression in "pursuit of a fuller humanity" (Freire, 1993, p. 21). Only then will genuine partnerships and escape from the humanitarian embrace become a real possibility.

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The Cautious Politics of "Humanizing" Refugee Research

Jonathan Darling

ABSTRACT
In this intervention, I reflect on what it may mean to 'humanize' refugee research. The assumption often made is that 'humanizing' can arise through a concern with the particularity of the individual, through drawing from 'the mass' the narrative of the singular and employing this as a means to identify, empathise, and potentially understand others. Yet such a move risks a reliance on creating relations of empathy and compassion that elide political responses to dehumanization and often relies on a universalist assumption of what constitutes the category of "the human," an assumption that has been critically challenged by post-colonial writing.

KEYWORDS
humanization; refugee studies; refugee mobility; race

RESUMÉ
Dans cette intervention, je réfléchis à ce que pourrait signifier d'«humanizer» la recherche sur les réfugiés. On suppose souvent que l'«humanisation» peut émerger à travers une attention à la particularité de l'individu, en puisant dans «la masse» le récit singulier et en utilisant ceci comme moyen de s'identifier, de compatir et potentiellement de comprendre les autres. Cependant, par un tel geste on court le risque de miser sur le recours à la création de relations d'empathie et de compassion qui passe outre à une réponse politique à la déshumanisation et qui repose sur une présomption universaliste de ce qui constitue la catégorie de «l'humain», présomption qui a été remise en question par les écrits postcoloniaux.

What does it mean to "humanize" in the context of refugee studies? Humanization is an often-cited desire for activists, scholars, and journalists and is associated, in part, with an effort to challenge the presentation of refugees as abstract masses that threaten the sanctity and security of the nation-state (Hartley & Fleay, 2017; Kirkwood, 2017; Papastergiadis, 2009). Yet critical discussions rarely consider what this concern with humanization might entail in any depth. In this short intervention, I outline the need to consider more fully, and more carefully, what to **humanize** might mean and to be mindful of the political and moral limits of such a drive. My concern is not to argue against humanization but to urge caution in seeking a turn to humanity that overrides alterity and that risks reducing the multiple, incomplete, and fragmented nature of refugee experience into a universalizing category in order to promote empathy and com-

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passion. In doing so, this intervention firstly considers processes of dehumanization and how recent journalism has sought to respond to such challenges through the foregrounding of stories of mobility, before discussing the limits—and dangers—of these framings of human commonality and connection.

In reflecting on what it means to humanize, we might start with its opposite, and far more readily analyzed, process: that of dehumanization. As noted across a range of work, the dehumanization of refugees takes many forms, from patterns of representation and imagery in news coverage that focus on abstracted groups (Bleiker et al., 2013; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017); to political rhetoric and language that associates refugees with insects, natural disasters, and disease (Dempsey & McDowell, 2019; Ibrahim & Howarth, 2015); to policies of securitization and militarization that expose refugees to violence and abuse at borders across the world (Jones, 2016). Critical to all these forms of dehumanization are two processes. First is the portrayal of refugees as lacking human qualities or character (Haslam, 2006; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014); second is the mobilization of such supposed human deficiencies to legitimate differences in treatment and understandings of moral worth within the boundaries of a given political or social community (Sales, 2002). Not only is the "deservingness" of refugees placed in question through the imagery, rhetoric, and policies of dehumanization, but such cultural formations legitimate, and indeed compel, the exclusion of refugees from a right to move. As Kirkwood (2017) argues, dehumanization produces defensive responses as it reduces the scope for empathy within a society while at the same time producing a desire to protect "us" from "them," founding the conditions for exclusionary policies and politics (Bleiker et al., 2013).

Examples of dehumanization, and its corrosive and violent effects, are widespread in discussions of refugee mobility (Hartley & Fleay, 2017). For example, critical studies have explored the dehumanizing policies, representations, and politics of refugee reception at the borders of Europe through the so-called refugee crisis (Collyer & King, 2016; Crawley, 2016). Amid these discussions have been consistent calls to respond to the dehumanization of refugees through processes of humanization, read as an effort to encourage empathy and legitimize support through foregrounding common human qualities (Dempsey & McDowell, 2019; Trilling, 2018). In this sense, humanization refers to the discursive effort of "constructing people as belonging to a common moral community, of acting in ways that are understandable, and as deserving of support" (Kirkwood, 2017, p. 116). To humanize is to recognize and respect the human qualities of those who are, after all, human (Burrell & Hörschelmann, 2019). In a context of dehumanization, to humanize is a political process, and in the remainder of this intervention, I want to consider what challenges this presents.

One of the most pervasive responses to the "refugee crisis" in Europe has been the emergence of modes of journalism that seek, in varying ways, to challenge dehumanizing narratives. To take two examples from a far broader corpus, in Patrick Kingsley's (2017) *The New Odyssey* and Daniel Trilling's (2018) *Lights in the Distance*, we see a common concern with tracing the mobilities of refugees at the borders of Europe, detailing the decision-making processes that shape mobility and the political structures that condition and constrain choices. These texts exemplify a wider trend of long-form journalism and storytelling that relies on individual testimony to convey the multiple moti-

vations, experiences, and personalities of refugees as they traverse borders and confront governmental structures of control and care (Mcdonald-Gibson, 2016; Smith, 2016). In part, such work responds to both academic and advocacy-driven calls for journalism to further foreground the voices and narratives of refugees and to convey the complexities of refugees' experiences (Migrant Voice, 2014; Smith & Waite, 2019).

For example, Trilling's (2018) text is structured around encounters with a series of characters as they traverse the borders of "fortress Europe." Of these interlocutors, he writes,

> Most though, are neither innocents nor villains, but people trying to retain control over their lives and making complex decisions about what risks to take, what rules to flout, what lies to tell. Like the rest of us, they are constantly making and remaking stories that explain their place in the world.
>
> *Trilling, 2018, p. 262*

Similarly, Kingsley's investigation is framed through the close recounting of one refugees' journey:

> Every other chapter (or thereabouts) is about Hashem's quest for safety. His very personal narrative is juxtaposed with the narrative of the wider crisis, allowing us to cycle between the journey of an individual and that of the continent he passes through. Why Hashem in particular? He's no freedom fighter or superhero. He's just an ordinary Syrian. But that's why I want to tell his story. It's the story of an everyman, in whose footsteps any of us could one day tread.
>
> *Kingsley, 2017, p. 11*

The promise of such journalism is in displaying the "human reality" of refugee mobility as this strand of writing focuses on the personal struggles of the "refugee crisis." We see here a focus on the individual lives of people who are "like the rest of us," as means both to foreground human connections with refugee narratives and to produce a sense of what it means to be human, what it means to be "an everyman," as Kingsley puts it. The ordinariness of the individual is brought to the fore in these narratives, which position the stories of refugees as at once both complex and prosaic, as narratives that might be identified with from the perspective of a shared or common sense of constrained decisions, hopes, and vulnerabilities.

The value that is attached to these efforts at humanization is notable in the reception these texts received. In a review for the *New Statesman*, George (2018) argues that in portraying "the reality of life" (para. 2) for refugees, Trilling has "done us a great service by turning masses and numbers into people whom we like, who we can see are like us" (para. 16), while the journalist Jon Snow argues that Kingsley's writing "dis-entangles the individual from the mass" within popular narratives of a "refugee crisis" (cited in Kingsley, 2017, p. iii). Critically though, this turn to centring refugee journeys as a means of responding to the dehumanization of refugees is one that foregrounds the individual and risks relying on a measure of sameness rather than difference. In doing so, there is a risk of obscuring alternative accounts of how the human, as a political category, has been constructed within structures of power and privilege. In the remainder of this intervention, I want to consider what power relations are reproduced through a focus on the human as an individual that is "like us." In particular, I draw out three concerns for how we think about humanization.

First is the assumption that humanizing can arise through a concern with the particularity of the individual, through drawing from "the mass" the narrative of the singular and employing this as a means to

identify, empathize, and potentially understand. This is, I would argue, a relatively common assumption in much advocacy work, articulating a desire to make coherent and to suggest that exposure to details, particularities, and individual human experience may change or, at the very least, affect people's thinking (Smith, 2016). Humanization seeks to counter the abstractions of dehumanization through a concern with "individual lives," and in this turn to the individual, humanization finds common human characteristics. For example, in discussing the transition from a rescue operation vessel into the waiting arms of Frontex officials at the Italian coast, Kingsley (2017) writes that after "a couple of days in which the refugees have been treated like humans, they're about to become mere statistics again" (p. 151). On the boat, he argues, refugees were seen and treated "as people with a story" rather than being "just seen as a statistic" (p. 152).

The human is at once both a singular and a multitude in such an imaginary. However, when such commonality becomes a normative basis for shaping how the human is understood, this poses political challenges. If we return to George's (2018) discussion of Trilling's book, we see these dangers in the argument that this book turns "masses and numbers into people whom we like" (para. 16). To humanize is thus, in part, to "turn numbers into people," but whether "we" like these people or not should not be a concern for a politics of refuge—social and spatial justice should not be a politics of preference.

The normative dimensions of humanization are twofold in these examples. On the one hand, there is a concern with identifying, valorizing, and making visible attributes held in common as a means to foster compassionate responses (George, 2018; Smith, 2016). On the other hand, we see a linked, and problematic, desire to humanize through incorporation into a given framing of the human. Humanization as a normative project can thus be an effort to compel empathy towards refugees in public opinion and to bridge distances between decision-makers and migrants (Gill, 2016, 2018). However, relying on empathy or compassion is not without risks. Just as discussions of the cultural politics of welcome have highlighted how welcoming can be divisive in its reproduction of power relations of hospitality and ownership, and in its fragility to being co-opted for exclusive political purposes (Darling, 2014, 2018; Gill, 2018), so, too, a focus on empathy as the basis for addressing the violence of borders does little to subvert the power relations underpinning such regimes. Indeed, as Gill (2016) argues, while compassion may be valuable as a starting point, it should be seen as a politics of last resort that requires critical questioning over who has the capacity to be compassionate and for what purposes. At their least critical, moral gestures of empathy, compassion, hospitality, and tolerance may sustain structures of power and privilege (Wilson, 2014). A focus on empathy as a positive outcome of humanizing refugees leaves open the question of what power structures are reproduced through this turn to the universalizing category of the human.

Second, we might consider how refugee studies can resist a humanization that imposes a universalizing, and normative, account of the human. One provisional response is to draw on Jazeel's (2019) decolonial discussion of the possibilities of the singular. The accounts noted earlier all point to the particularities of refugee lives as an aspect of journalistic narrative, but in humanizing, these accounts return to a coherent overview of refugee mobility and its policy implications. Jazeel's critique advocates

resisting this urge and remaining with the singular as a means to open new avenues of thought. One approach, he argues, is to focus on the fragments that run through research. In Jazeel's words,

> We might think about fragments as those traces found in field or archival work; a scrap of speech, a tract of text, a narrative, a material thing found or alluded to by a research participant perhaps. Fragments rarely make sense to our well-trained ethnographic eye or historical gaze. The fragment is thus evidence of some other whole thing, but evidence of what exactly we can rarely be sure. … The fragment in this analysis, is a lure, an invitation to pause and stay with difference.
>
> *Jazeel, 2019, p. 14*

This practice of pausing is where we might find critical purchase for new ways of thinking through refugee mobility. Those fragments that never add up to a whole may reflect many aspects of refugee politics, far more so than a desire to make the whole come into view, to cohere for a policy, story, or programme of study. A question to consider going forward is thus what a concern with incomplete and incoherent stories may mean for how we think about refugee mobility.

Refugee studies might thus begin to consider how aspects of incoherence and the juxtaposition of singular cases offer forms of humanization that avoid reduction to a singular, normative account of the human. To humanize in this sense would be to focus on human experience as fragmentary, incoherent, and resistant to clear categorization, pushing back against the "categorical fetishism" argued to pervade discussions of refuge (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). At the same time, staying with the fragmentary in this manner draws further attention to the failures of the category of the refugee and its inability to protect human rights when situated outside the humanizing role of the citizen (Arendt, 1958).

Finally, staying with a singularity that avoids reductionism is significant for one further reason—that, as a number of recent critical discussions have foregrounded, the very category of "the human" and the forms of rights ascribed to this category have served to sustain a series of political, and epistemological, closures (Esposito, 2012; Weheliye, 2014). If humanization offers a universalizing gesture that may promote empathy (Kirkwood, 2017), then that universality risks losing sight of the differential ways in which the category of the human has been claimed and inhabited. Indeed, the entangled nature of dehumanization and attempts to humanize require further critical scrutiny and consideration, not least because both draw upon assumptions that the category of "the human" or "humanity" offers a stable whole into which individuals may be assimilated. Yet, as Weheliye (2014, p. 4) argues, the prospective inclusivity of being "human" is a fiction. Race has historically operated as a "set of socio-political processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans," and as such, racial assemblages constitute "the visual modalities in which dehumanization is practiced and lived" (Weheliye, 2014, p. 6). The process of humanization, and the desire "to humanize," therefore takes on a different resonance when the historical violences of the category of "the human" are brought to the fore. Reading the human in these terms—as a product of racial capitalism, biopolitics, and forms of border oppression—poses questions for how humanization might focus attention on the violent closures that have shaped how the human has come to be understood. To humanize in these terms requires careful

and critical work to resist totalizing universalisms that occlude the violence of citizenship regimes, borders, and racial hierarchies that have sustained the exclusion of those seeking refuge and have produced the dehumanization of migrant bodies.

To conclude, in this brief intervention, I have sought to present a series of questions over the normative desire to humanize refugee mobility in the face of prevalent forms of dehumanization. In doing so, I have reflected on some of the limits of a turn to humanization that relies on reducing the particularity of the individual to a universal feature of humanity and that employs this universality as a wellspring for compassion and empathy. This is not to argue that more assertive forms of migrant rights may not fold out from humanization; indeed, this may be a critical prerequisite for recognizing refugees as legitimate bearers of, and claimants to, rights (Nyers, 2006; Trilling, 2018). Rather, I argue that humanization alone does not achieve this. Importantly, this is because the category of the human upon which humanization rests has itself been a product of racialized ordering, such that the category of the fully human has rarely been open to all (Weheliye, 2014).

To return to the context of Europe's refugee "crisis" that I opened with, El-Enany (2016) argues that in the midst of popular drives to welcome refugees, a selective practice of empathy was in evidence, one that revealed implicit sets of racial biases (Forgiarini et al., 2011), as drives to humanize refugees focused on certain racialized bodies at the expense of others. Absent from such efforts to humanize, El-Enany, (2016, p. 14) argues, was an understanding or account of the colonial histories and present imperial violence that have determined the very uneven ground on which this selective humanization takes place. Such absences, and their violent effects, are why humanizing refuge and displacement requires crucial, but careful, work that is open to multiple ways of understanding what it means to be human.

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Humanizing Refugee Research in a Turbulent World

Oliver Bakewell

ABSTRACT

This essay adopts a critical perspective of the idea of humanizing refugee research. It argues that much social scientific research is intrinsically dehumanizing, as it simplifies and reduces human experience to categories and models that are amenable to analysis. Attempts to humanize research may productively challenge and unsettle powerful and dominant hegemonic structures that frame policy and research on forced migration. However, it may replace them with new research frameworks, now imbued authority as representing more authentic or real-life experiences. Rather than claiming the moral high ground of humanizing research, the more limited, and perhaps more honest, ambition should be to recognize the inevitable dehumanization embedded in refugee research and seek to dehumanize differently.

KEYWORDS

refugee research; humanizing research; dehumanization; policy; categorization

RESUMÉ

Cet essai adopte une perspective critique à l'égard de l'idée d'humaniser la recherche sur les réfugiés. Il soutient qu'une grande partie de la recherche en sciences sociales est intrinsèquement déshumanisante en ce qu'elle simplifie et réduit l'expérience humaine à des catégories et des modèles se prêtant à l'analyse. Les tentatives d'humaniser la recherche peuvent efficacement remettre en question et déstabiliser les structures hégémoniques puissantes et dominantes qui encadrent les politiques publiques et la recherche sur la migration forcée. Par contre, elle pourrait les remplacer par de nouveaux cadres de recherche, désormais imprégnés d'autorité comme représentant des expériences plus authentiques ou plus proches de réalités vécues. Plutôt que de revendiquer une position de supériorité morale en humanisant la recherche, une ambition plus restreinte, et peut-être plus honnête, serait de reconnaître que la déshumanisation est inévitable dans la recherche sur les réfugiés et de chercher à déshumaniser autrement.

In this forum, we are focusing on the theme of humanizing refugee research. To my mind this suggests making our analysis more nuanced, more responsive to the reality of people's experiences, and contributing to more humane outcomes. The notion is rather comforting and positive. Who can object to it? This short essay offers some provocation that counters this cozy perspective. I start by looking at the dehumanization of refugees in the process of bureaucratic labelling. I then look at how this relates to the similar process of categorization that is fundamental to much social scientific research. My proposi-

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tion is simply that the work of social science can be seen by its very nature to be dehumanizing because it is impossible to analyze the full human experience. Instead, we work with models and simplifications that amplify some aspects and play down others. I suggest that our challenge is to recognize this and ask how we can dehumanize differently, for example, by looking at alternative ways of formulating these models and more critical analysis.

It is clear that there are competing narratives shaping states' policies on refugees and their practical responses to them. On the one hand, there is the story of ideals and a moral imperative. This emphasizes state concerns with upholding rights—in particular, basic human rights and the right to seek asylum—and duties—the international obligation to provide protection. On the other hand, there is the narrative of refugees as a burden and threat for the state and the society that receives them. Here, the noise about human rights is muted. Instead, the first response of states is more concerned with controlling access to refugee status and the resources associated with it, such as humanitarian aid or state welfare. An important technique for this control is the establishment of rigorous criteria for the recognition of refugees. These criteria are used as the basis for challenging the status of the people making claims for asylum with a presumption that they do not meet them.

In crude terms, we can see the former narrative paraded more strongly when it comes to claims about the obligations of others—for example, the international concern about Kenya's repeated threats to close Somali refugee camps in 2016 and 2021 (Muiruri, 2021). While it was prominent within the boundaries of western Europe during the Cold War, this rights narrative has lost ground to that of burden and threat since the late 1980s, particularly in recent years, as the number of asylum seekers arriving in Europe from poorer regions of the world has grown dramatically. One of the impacts of this shift towards seeking grounds for rejecting asylum claims is the development of ever finer-grained categories. For example, between 2013 and 2014, Germany created three new forms of humanitarian status that admitted Syrians to the country but with fewer rights than those available to convention refugees (Tometten, 2018). By such means, people are diverted to a secondary status, and the criteria for eligibility to full refugee status can be narrowed. This limits the numbers of people with entitlement, whether to protection, humanitarian aid, or other support.

To some extent, we can argue that such categorization and bureaucratic labelling are always somewhat dehumanizing. They demand that we focus on particular qualities of people to group them together as people who will exhibit particular behaviour, have particular needs, be exposed to particular risks, and so forth. As Wood (1985) and later Zetter (1991) argued, referring particularly to refugees, labelling replaces the individual with a stereotyped identity; the complex human story is reduced to the bare facts of the case. It is on the basis of this bureaucratic process that critical decisions are made about refugees' lives. Subsequently, Zetter (2007) observed how new labels emerged to tease out distinctions between people and determine their level of entitlement. He cited the way the United Kingdom's Home Office used the label **asylum seeker**, breaking it down to seven subcategories, or segments, including minors (under 18 years of age), those making late or opportunistic applications, or those who had passed through a third country, where they could have claimed asylum. Once applicants were assigned to a

segment on the basis of their fit with assessment criteria, the outcome of their claim was largely determined.

While it is easy to decry the dehumanizing aspects of the labelling process, it serves an important role: "Bureaucracies need labels to identify categories of clients in order to implement and manage policies designed for them" (Zetter, 2007, p. 184). It is a necessary part of a bureaucracy to ensure that the action of the state can be based on "objective," "standardised," or "technical" criteria rather than a result: either of individual negotiation that reflects a person's power and access to resources, whether in the form of wealth, knowledge, social networks, or other forms of privilege; or of states privileging particular groups of people over others on the basis of race, religion, political expediency, or other grounds. In this sense, formal, public criteria for determining action introduces some element of accountability for states and prevents the most egregious bias. At minimum, it makes it possible for deviations from the criteria to be noticed and challenged.

However, such bureaucratic labelling may only create a superficial veneer of neutrality and justice as the criteria underpinning the labels may be carefully designed around political and social discrimination. This was evident in the late 1940s and 1950s, when European governments created an amazing array of categories to separate out those they saw as desirable from the undesirable migrants, refugees, and displaced persons in the aftermath of the Second World War (Gatrell, 2019, pp. 35–68). These are far from being objective or merely technical bureaucratic processes. Therefore, there needs to be ongoing and important critical discussion about the nature of these labels and the criteria that assign them. They will embody and entrench structures of privilege, reinforcing and establishing norms of identity and behaviour. They must be contingent on evaluations and critiques of their (im)partiality and subject to revision. Nonetheless, the labels at play at any particular time perform a critical role in enabling states and other actors, such as non-governmental organizations, to operate and provide protection, however flawed.

In the face of such bureaucratic systems, we are all reduced to the categories that we are deemed to fit—student, employee, graduate, pensioner, citizen, and so forth. In this sense, this practice of labelling is dehumanizing as it cuts away a large part of our lives and does not acknowledge us as unique, rounded, and complex individuals. However, it is an open and contentious question whether it would be better to have a state bureaucracy to which all the different aspects of our lives are legible and known (assuming that this were even possible). Perhaps this idea of disclosure takes us close to the vision being opened by the recent developments in data capture by the likes of Google, Facebook, or Sesame Credit in China (Lee, 2019). This makes many of us very nervous. I am not sure we want to be seen completely in the round, particularly by states.

Reflecting on a comment from Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (at the workshop on Humanising Studies of Refuge and Displacement, 2018), I find it is important to recognize the performativity of people's presentation of themselves. At times, they may consciously play up particular aspects of their lives, depending on the audience and their ideas of its expectations. This is a common experience for someone undergoing an interview, whether for a job or an asylum application. It is not just on such occasions that we perform. All of our social interactions constitute a performance that varies with the

audience and the context. Our behaviour changes unconsciously as we shift between settings. As a result, there is no consistent and objective identity to be observed; our identities are produced by our constantly varying performance. In the face of this fluidity, bureaucrats will inevitably struggle to work out who is the "genuine" asylum seeker. Equally, those objecting to the dehumanizing processes of states may be demanding that they recognize a person's "real" identity, which does not exist.

Hence, rather than harbour a growing expectation of people showing authenticity and openness, perhaps the best that should be asked is that they are not subject to the crude system of labelling and that stereotypes be challenged. These reflections make me wonder if the creation of ever finer categories that take more account of the complexity of people's lives (as we often see in refugee or asylum systems) perhaps comes closer to recognizing them as more human. If this is correct, it brings up the question of whether our complaint should be about the dehumanization of the policies so much as the politicization of bureaucracies. This is not to suggest that bureaucracies have ever been apolitical; but the ever-sharper delineation of categories, often couched in terms of technical refinement, serves to exclude more people from recognition as refugees or other categories that secure their protection and access to rights. It can be seen as an important element in the political project of dismantling of the architecture of rights.

With this in mind, I turn to the issue of humanizing refugee research in a turbulent world. What are we concerned with? As social scientific researchers, I think we are seeking to make some generalizations: we aspire to take our knowledge from one setting to build up our understanding of another setting. We use concepts and categories to build up "models" or ideas of how things connect to each other. Like bureaucracies, social scientists (and here I would include even anthropologists) are reductive in a somewhat ordered way. They may carefully rationalize their decisions to include some aspects of life and exclude others to create this order. Of course, given the comments above, we could say that all human interactions involve some element of reductionism, as we can see only what is performed by others, but it is not systematic in the same way. For researchers, this reductionism results in a set of analytical categories that can be shared between social scientists and used to try to make sense of the world and to generate new insights.

Some years ago, I wrote of the importance of distinguishing between such analytical categories and those used in policy (Bakewell, 2008). I argued that research should not be bound by policy categories as it creates three critical constraints. First, it limits the questions that we ask as it sets up a taken-for-granted view of the world that compares those within the category (say, refugees) with those outside (say, hosts) and prioritizes this above other intersecting areas of comparison (e.g., class, education, or sexual orientation). Second, it confines the object of study to particular categories of people seen as in need or otherwise problematic (e.g., displaced people). Finally, it constrains methodology and analysis as we frame discussion around the issues that are legible to policymakers. Even when we challenge policy categories, we come back to them to make our work comprehensible to others.

Reflecting on this over 10 years later, I am not sure that the issues have changed so much. Many others have written on similar themes in the intervening years, and in this essay, I make no claim to do justice to

all this inspiring literature (e.g., Brubaker, 2013; Cole, 2021; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018; Dahinden et al., 2021; Benson et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2019; Sözer, 2019; Will, 2018). This work makes it clear that there remains the great challenge of navigating the priorities and frameworks that are shaped by powerful interests—at times including those of academics. Of course, states, international organizations, businesses, and a whole host of other powerful actors not only are implicated in creating the problems confronting refugees and other forced migrants but also play a crucial role in addressing them. Along with any others who aspire to ameliorate the situation, scholars need to work constructively with these parties and manage the multiple compromises this entails, which includes engaging with the categories they impose. While we may question the way that people are assigned to categories such as refugee or harbour doubts about the use of the term at all, it seems inevitable that we must use them if we are to communicate and have any impact in the world. This does not mean that we accept these categories as given, nor do we need to base our analysis on them. The puzzle we face is how to challenge and possibly subvert these categories to provide alternative perspectives.

Much of my research is on migration and refugee issues, which means that the fact that people have moved in some way is often at the forefront of my mind. I tend to assume its salience to understanding their position. I explain the behaviour of someone with reference to their status as a refugee or other forced migrant, and it is easy to assume a set of vulnerabilities to particular hazards that are associated with this status. For example, in a study on returns to Somalia conducted in 2018, it was clear that there were very high levels of displacement, but we found that for many the category of internally displaced person (IDP) is seen as a trap. Those identified as IDPs are subject to discrimination—accused of bringing disease, unemployment, and insecurity—and are more vulnerable to rights violations, including violence and evictions with no recourse. However, their living conditions and economic position may be little different from rural–urban migrants, many of whom have been compelled to move for similar reasons. These migrants are not recognized as IDPs, and they are able to avoid the stigma of the label. Others have the resources to move into better living conditions, and their economic position helps ensure they avoid being labelled as IDPs, despite having been forced to leave their homes under the threat of violence (Sturridge et al., 2018). This suggests that the (policy) category of IDP may say much more about issues of class and clan than it does about people's experiences of displacement. As an academic, it is possible to explore how these different axes of inequality intersect both with the way that the category of IDP is applied in policy and experience of displacement. Nguyen (2019) takes this much further in a reconstruction of the refugee category using the concept of **refugeetude**.

My discomfort with the policy categories does encourage me to question them in this way, along with many others (e.g., Cole, 2021; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Sözer, 2019). Nonetheless, even when I challenge the meaning of the IDP label, I am implicitly replacing it with other categories based on other criteria: income, livelihood sources, type of housing, clan, place of birth, and so forth. This may result in a much more nuanced intersectional account that draws attention to the problems with the term IDP, challenges some of the assumptions about those categorized as IDPs, and accounts more for people's lived experiences. Nonetheless,

as a research team, we still impose our interests on the analysis. We focus on some aspect of people's lives and inevitably neglect others. The process is still reductionist and to some extent dehumanizing. Perhaps this is a legitimate part of our role as social scientists, and it can serve to generate some useful understandings. I struggle to see a way to escape from some form of categorization to make some sense of the world.

This then makes me skeptical about the feasibility of humanizing refugee research, in the sense of enabling it to take account of the full human experience. As I have argued above, the process of much social scientific research requires the researcher to work with abstract concepts and models that cannot possibly capture the complexity of human life. Moreover, there are profound questions about the nature of personhood or identity that can be represented in research. Our attempts to deconstruct the narrow, reductive, policy-related concepts and categories may result in the formulation of much more nuanced and grounded concepts and categories, emerging from empirical research and dialogue with a wide range of actors, in particular, the voices of those often marginalized or silenced. These are the product of a different political process, but it is not clear that they are necessarily any more of a "natural," "humanized" set of categories than those we started with.

As we work more closely with those who are marginalized, attempting to humanize refugee research may inflate our sense of worthiness. It may change profoundly the way situations are analyzed and understood. However, it may also create a new hegemony of concepts and categories that are imbued with a sense of authenticity and moral superiority but no less dehumanizing. I should stress that I am not for a moment suggesting that this process of changing the frames for debate and analysis is not worthwhile. I have not given up on my call for policy-irrelevant research into forced migration (Bakewell, 2008). My skepticism is about aspiring to **humanize** refugee research. It may be more productive and usefully subversive to acknowledge the dehumanization inherent in our work as social scientists. We may not want to celebrate it, but we need to politicize it, dehumanize differently, and provide alternative perspectives so that we can resist the standard scripts, such as those embodied in the categories that frame so much research into forced migration.

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Humanizing Studies of Refuge and Displacement—Considering Complicity, Contingency, and Compromise

Christopher G. Anderson

Since the 1980s, the field of refugee and forced migration studies (hereafter, **the field**) has routinely been engaged and positioned through reflection on such interrelated features as its focus, goals, concepts, methods, consequences, and limitations (Black, 2001; Bloch, 2020; Chimni, 1998; Landau, 2012; Malkki, 1995; McGrath & Young, 2019; Scallettaris, 2007; Stein & Tomasi, 1981; Zetter, 1988). These efforts have, borrowing from Terpstra (2015, p. 8), not been so much "sequential but concentric in their relations one to the other [as n]ew interpretations more often absorb than overturn their predecessors." The interventions on "Humanizing Studies of Refuge and Displacement?" presented in this issue of ***Refuge*** fit this form, confirming and conditioning while challenging core ideas and approaches.[1] Indeed, their exploration of humanization as a heuristic contributes to an ongoing and important conversation about the meaning and purpose of critical scholarship and its potential to reflect and improve the lives of refugees and other forced migration populations. For its part, this short commentary aims to situate this initiative on humanizing within the field and, in doing so, explore features of complicity, contingency, and compromise contained in both initiative and field alike. These operate as constitutive factors and forces as scholars navigate between seeking change within the world that is and pursuing humanization through a more radical and transformative process of worldmaking.

A recognized obstacle in humanizing studies of refuge and displacement stems from the fact that the central notion of **humanizing** operates—appropriately but not without difficulty—at a broad and indicative level. For example, **Oliver Bakewell** proposes that it might involve "making our analysis more nuanced, more responsive to the reality of people's experiences and contributing to more humane outcomes." To humanize, **Jonathan Darling** offers, is "to recognize and respect the human qualities of those who are, after all, human." As has been shown in studies of humanitarianism (e.g., Dauvergne, 2005; Fassin, 2012; Harrell-Bond, 2002), however, determining what it means

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, the quotations included in this commentary are drawn from the contributions published in this special focus section of *Refuge*.

to be human(e) and acting upon it are often embedded in discriminatory and exploitative assumptions, processes, and structures that can perpetuate and perpetrate injustice and even violence against refugees and other forced migration populations. The concept and practice of humanizing is presented through the initiative, therefore, as "necessarily a partial and unfinished project—a series of openings rather than a definitive closure" (**Brankamp & Weima**). As such, it resists "a turn to humanity that overrides alterity … [that] risks losing sight of the differential ways in which the category of the human has been claimed and inhabited" (**Darling**). In consequence, as it envisions "what more emancipatory scholarship might entail," the initiative provides "a shorthand for the diverse, radical challenges to all sources of dehumanizing politics and scholarship" (**Brankamp & Weima**).

In pursuit of such an "emancipatory humanization" (**Brankamp & Weima**), the interventions included here push against discursive, policy, and political approaches that **dehumanize** refugees and other forced migration populations. While the centrality of dehumanization in the creation of refugees and as a precursor to other extreme forms of violence such as slavery and genocide has been studied for some time (Smith, 2020), its explicit role in societal and state responses to human displacement in contemporary liberal democracies is a relatively recent emphasis in the field.[2] Such dehumanization is now identified, **Darling** recounts,

> [in] many forms, from patterns of representation and imagery in news coverage that focus on abstracted groups …; to political rhetoric and language that associates refugees with insects, natural disasters, and disease …; to policies of securitization and militarization that expose refugees to violence and abuse at borders across the world.

For her part, **Yolanda Weima** traces how the prominent trend to conceptualize and address "refugees as resources" in an effort to humanize them in a world in which they are perceived as threatening can serve, instead, to dehumanize them by "rely[ing] on human/non-human distinctions to define commodities for the extraction of value [that are] bound up with racialized hierarchies fundamental to capitalism."

Thus, the humanizing initiative operates as a conceptual, methodological, ethical, and political—indeed, epistemological—response to a dehumanization that engenders as it embodies a more constrained and selective empathy and receptivity, and even antipathy or outright hostility, towards refugees and other forced migration populations by and within liberal democracies, a trajectory traced in the field since at least the early 1980s.[3]

The humanizing initiative also builds on long-standing concerns about the detrimental effects for refugees of scholarly cooperation with and co-optation by powerful state and non-state actors, institutions, and interests within the humanitarian sector (Bakewell, 2008; Harrell-Bond, 1986). This is captured by **Hanno Brankamp**, who writes of the "humanitarian embrace" that researchers face, "this encroachment of institutional logics, values, discursive frames, solutions, and infrastructures on research engagements with/among refugees and forced migrants," which can render aca-

[2] For one of the earliest published works on refugees with dehumanization in the title, see Leach (2003); since then, numerous works have appeared using this term/framework to explore liberal-democratic responses to population displacement.

[3] For example, Grahl-Madsen (1983, p. 15) observed that "we can sense in country after country a tendency toward a more restrictive interpretation and application of important provisions [of refugee protection], sometimes even a disregard for rules of international law." He nonetheless wrote that "humanism may be struggling, but compassion is not dead" (p. 12).

demics "complicit in legitimizing the containment and epistemic ring-fencing of racialized southern refugees in the geopolitical interests of Global North countries." Dehumanization within the humanitarian sector itself, **Patricia Daley** recounts, is not new but extends from earlier (and at times overlooked) colonial and racial assumptions, practices, and processes that continue to shape the international refugee regime as it operates "to regulate and control bodies considered to be outside their 'natural' and national geographies." It can also be fostered, **Estella Carpi** suggests, through academic institutional settings (including those dedicated to refugee studies) when they "fossilize around aprioristic categories of analysis, making research subjects instrumental" to scholarship and policy rather than the reverse.

Such complicity is explored further in the humanizing initiative, with the positioning of scholars themselves explicitly and intimately within the dehumanizing process. **Daley** observes, for example, that "the discourse of non-academic protagonists tends to be interrogated as to whether it inspires incitement to hatred and violence or othering, but that of the academic receives less attention." This is problematic, **Brankamp and Weima** write, because "systems of marginalization and dehumanization are not just **external** objects for academic inquiry but are woven into the very ways in which we conceive, plan, conduct, experience, write, and present studies on displacement and (im)mobility." Indeed, **Bakewell** questions whether it is even possible for scholars to avoid such dehumanization so much as "to politicize it, dehumanize differently, and provide alternative perspectives, so that we can resist the standard scripts … that frame so much research into forced migration."[4] It is therefore important, **Carpi** suggests, for academics to undertake "an intimate process of self-inquiry … [with] substantial room for a form of self-criticism … that we start ourselves, as well as others do," which might ultimately "generate concrete possibilities for transformational research and our own humanization."

Many of the core conceptual and methodological approaches and ideas proposed to counter dehumanization align readily with those found in the field aimed at improving how the lives of refugees and other forced migration populations are understood and how such knowledge is used to acknowledge and support their agency, interests, needs, and rights. For example, across these contributions, the humanizing initiative encourages such practices as reformulating or even transcending core conceptual categories (e.g., refugee, state, power); ensuring that dimensions such as race and gender are central analytical components through engagement with critical scholarship in other fields (e.g., critical race theory, decoloniality, feminism); displacing the privileged positions of northern knowledge production; opposing liberal individualist and market responses to displacement; incorporating historical perspective in addressing contemporary phenomena; embracing interdisciplinarity and intersectionality, and creating supportive institutional settings to this end; avoiding the exploitation of particular communities through over-research; working in a more direct and collaborative manner with displaced populations themselves; and decelerating scholarship to improve the quality of research and to ensure that it serves refugees and other forced migration populations rather than academic career advance-

[4] Such alternative perspectives, **Bakewell** cautions, "are the product of a different political process, but it is not clear that they are necessarily any more of a 'natural,' 'humanized' set of categories than those we started with."

ment and powerful actors, institutions, and interests. In keeping with ongoing developments in the field, then, the humanizing initiative highlights numerous possible ways and means for scholars to observe Turton 's (1996, p. 96) oft-quoted ethical injunction that there can be no "justification for conducting research into situations of extreme human suffering if one does not have the alleviation of suffering as an explicit objective of one's research."

In order to reach the field's potential to do so more fully, scholars need to—**Brankamp** and **Weima** suggest—"practise and advance a radical scholarship that is grounded in political solidarity for social and racial justice." This requires, **Daley** writes, the pursuit of "an anti-racist agenda with counter-hegemonic critiques … and new terminologies emphasizing alternative ways of belonging, a common humanity, and mutuality." For their part, **Brankamp** and **Weima** propose that "radical change can only be sought through political solidarity and protest, as well as substantive critiques of global capitalism, epistemic violence, structural exclusion, and racialized control." This will require, **Brankamp** concludes, "disobedient methodologies" to disrupt "the enduring coloniality, racism, and epistemic erasures of academic practices."

A commitment to such "genuine radical endeavours" (**Carpi**) operates within familiar boundaries of discussions in the field concerning the "dual imperative" of research scholarship and policy influence (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003) and, by extension, the determination and navigation of the boundaries between academic and activist work.[5] It goes further, however, in encouraging an emphasis not just on alleviating suffering but on a larger political project of dedicated world-making.[6] This direction is indicated, for example, when **Brankamp and Weima** raise the prospect—quoting Ibeanu (1990, p. 60)—that

> until the dominant interests in the world become those that guarantee justice, equity and freedom, not only in legal and political life, but in the totality of human existence, resolving the crisis of refugees and other displaced populations will remain a fleeting illusion.[7]

Alongside the various approaches and ideas recounted above, then, the undertaking of such a making of the world is understood to require more radical outlooks and sites of scholarship.

For example, on an epistemological front, **Hashem Abushama** proposes scholars can humanize their work by studying the "particularly subversive potential" of the lives lived in refugee camps, thereby moving beyond state-centred approaches that "are unquestionably seen as universally applicable, despite being Eurocentric and ethnospecific in their analysis." Thus, in his critique of Agamben's notion of "bare life"—which, he argues, distorts our understanding of the world as it leaves refugees "stripped off of their politics, existing outside the political sphere"— **Abushama** proposes that camps instead be approached not as

> a passive space onto which geographies of control and management are simply enacted [but] … also [as] a space constantly produced and reproduced by

[5] For example, more than 30 years ago, Robinson (1990, p. 13) wrote of the need to address "the balance between becoming involved in advocacy and action-oriented research on the one hand and undertaking 'objective' scientific research on the other."

[6] Getachew (2019, p. 2) employs the term worldmaking in reference to the process of decolonization, "a project of reordering the world that sought to create a domination-free and egalitarian international order … to overcome the legal and material manifestations of unequal [global political and economic] integration and inaugurate a postimperial world."

[7] To similar effect, **Brankamp and Weima** quote Sithole (2020, p. 75), who writes that "there cannot be humanism in the colonial condition. This condition is nothing but dehumanization."

> those living within its alleys, whose meanings, stories, narratives, images, poetics, music, dance moves, murals, wounds, and wedding circles … make it hard to tell one unified story.

"To humanize in this sense," **Darling** writes, is "to focus on human experience as fragmentary, incoherent, and resistant to clear categorization, pushing back against the 'categorical fetishism' argued to pervade discussions of refuge." Similarly, **Carpi** emphasizes the need for "delving into the multi-faceted significance of particular human processes." This accentuation of the specific and granular is offered for its potential to more beyond the injustices fostered "in a world shaped by European colonialism and its legacies" by "attend[ing] to the interrelations, interconnections, and mutuality existing beyond the white and northern humanitarian gaze" (**Daley**).

Alongside such an epistemological reorientation, the humanizing initiative encourages particular situational practices aimed at producing a more just world. For example, if scholars continue to work with powerful actors, institutions, and interests in the humanitarian sector, **Brankamp** proposes, then they should not focus on co-operation and collaboration—which, given the force of the "humanitarian embrace," is not "likely to benefit the long-term welfare and life goals of displaced people and others living under the humanitarian regime"—but should pursue a "politics of infiltration." This involves researchers exploiting their "privileged access to the corridors of power" to undertake "stealthy, playful, and disobedient forms of research that excavate and register dynamics of power as well as performatively disrupting them" (**Brankamp**). In this way, scholars can use their privilege "to subvert these very structures and ultimately work towards their undoing" (**Brankamp**). Alternatively, academics can seek to escape the constraints and dehumanizing effects of their institutional affiliations and traditions by engaging in accompaniment with refugees and other forced migration populations on the ground, which entails "an ongoing and, ultimately, uncertain effort to combine research with political action and worldmaking as it enacts the very relationships that it seeks to build" (**Brankamp**). Although distortionary effects of power differentials between "researchers" and "researched" would remain, **Brankamp** proposes that such "deliberate acts of togetherness, solidarity, listening, and mutual recognition" could nonetheless help to break the domination enacted in the humanitarian embrace and generate the "potential for emancipatory change."

While the humanizing initiative recognizes it embodies "the inherent fragility, uncertainty, and polysemy" that defines its pursuit, and while the interventions included vary in the encouraged "precise strategies, political alliances, and discourses necessary for this endeavour" (**Brankamp & Weima**), as a collection, it contributes to an ongoing and important conversation about the meaning and purpose of critical scholarship and its potential to reflect and improve the lives of refugees and other forced migration populations. Thus, although the following thoughts on complicity, contingency, and compromise are prompted by the interventions included here, they extend from and relate to broader discussions within the field and indeed beyond to the social sciences on the relative merits and techniques of pursuing change within the world that is and seeking a more radical and transformative process of worldmaking.

As noted earlier, the recognition of **complicity** is central to the humanizing initiative, and it has long been a matter of concern

within critical scholarship. As **Brankamp and Weima** observe, efforts to humanize studies of refuge and displacement require "grappling with, and situating ourselves and our scholarly institutions within, abiding structures of violence and erasure." **Darling**, for his part, warns of the "political and moral limits" to the process of humanizing, while **Bakewell** cautions that efforts to humanize research will involve "dehumaniz[ing] differently." Meanwhile, **Daley** suggests in the case of Malkki, and **Abushama** proposes with respect to Agamben, that even the work of critical scholars itself can be rendered complicit in processes of dehumanization—by fellow critical scholars, never mind policymakers—regardless of an author's intent.[8] The notion of complicity can be extended further, however. For example, it can also arise as a matter of effect for critical scholars, when important findings and insights exist between the two worlds defined, respectively, by the present confines of the humanitarian embrace and a future ideal of a postcolonial order. This can serve to entrench and extend dehumanization insofar as challenges to imperial and colonial power remain more matters of analysis and discourse about rather than influence on decisions and outcomes.[9] In such ways, then, complicity remains an under-analyzed and complex set of relations that transcend evident intentionality (Kapoor, 2005), and to the extent to which it is downplayed or overlooked, it may leave scholars "implicated in the production of harm" (**Daley**) through the creation of "a new hegemony of concepts and categories that are imbued with a sense of authenticity and moral superiority" (**Bakewell**).

One way to grapple with complicity is to appreciate how closely it is shaped by **contingency**, whereby anticipated and perceived options and results are reliant on circumstance but in a manner and of a nature that is often unpredictable and to degrees unknowable. Such contingency weighs against certainty in determining present and future conditions and alternatives (it offers greater degrees of certainty, however, when considering the past), which temper the identification and accumulation of knowledge and related efforts to promote change within or a remaking of the world. An obvious approach to contingency, of course, is for scholars to integrate greater historical perspective into their work—a practice found, however, to be too rare in the field (Kushner, 2006; Marfleet, 2007). By "excavating silenced histories" of colonized peoples, for example, it may be possible to understand better and begin to unravel "the legacy of the racialized and ethnicized colonial categorization of humanity" (**Daley**) that continues to affect scholarship and policy. Like complicity, however, contingency arises in various complex and consequential, if unsettled, forms in studies of refuge and displacement.

For example, contingency is divergently implicated in contrasting epistemological and methodological approaches promoted through the interventions included in the humanizing initiative. On the one hand, the call to engage in a more radical specificity, to "insist on the importance of miniscule movements, glimmers of hope, scraps of food, the interrupted dreams of freedom found in those spaces deemed devoid of full human life" (**Abushama**, quoting Weheliye, 2014, p. 12), privileges the exceptional in an

[8] As Chimni (2009, p. 14) observes, once produced, "knowledge is mostly dual use [and] can be deployed by social forces of both dominance and emancipation."

[9] Concerns over critical scholarship's lack of influence on policy decisions and policy outcomes have long been flagged in the field (see, e.g., Robinson, 1990).

effort to reflect more accurately the particular lives lived of refugees and other forced migration populations, and thereby subvert approaches that reinforce and extend colonial power. On the other hand, **Bakewell** locates scholarship within a broader social science imperative of "seeking to make some generalizations: we aspire to take our knowledge from one setting to build up our understanding of another setting" through "models and simplifications that amplify some aspects and play down others" in an effort "to make sense of the world and to generate new insights" while challenging narratives and categories that dehumanize to produce harm. Whether encouraging specificity ("staying with a singularity that avoids reductionism" [**Darling**]) or generality (being "reductive in a somewhat ordered way" [**Bakewell**]), each approach downplays by design aspects of its own contingency in order to speak meaningfully about the world.

If scholarly work is to some inextricable and significant extent complicit in the production of harm under conditions of uncertainty produced by contingency, then the role of compromise in scholarly work is an important question—especially with respect to policy-makers. On the one hand, at the more radical end of the humanizing initiative, there is an emphasis on turning away from co-operation and collaboration with organizations understood to embody the "humanitarian embrace." Similarly, at an ideational level, greater emphasis is placed on strategies that move away from prominent concepts and methods, as well as academic institutional settings, to replace them with new ones. On the other hand, the initiative also contains **Bakewell**'s proposition (in keeping with Zetter (1991, 2007) that although the categorization (and labelling) practices of powerful actors, institutions, and interests are deeply problematic, "scholars need to work constructively with these parties and manage the multiple compromises this entails, which includes engaging with the categories they impose."[10] Indeed, he writes that "it seems inevitable that we must use them if we are to communicate and have any impact in the world."

While the humanizing initiative does not aim to resolve such divergences of approach, it reinforces the idea that we do not, as scholars, escape being compromised to some degree in the pursuit of our work, and that it is important—individually and collectively as a field of study—to acknowledge and address this as well as we can in the face of considerable uncertainty. In their introduction, for example, **Brankamp and Weima** identify a number of pressing questions concerning the humanizing initiative itself, including whether "'humanizing' [is] at all viable or desirable" or if "we need to fundamentally rethink what research can achieve." Although these questions are purposefully left unanswered, the interventions included here suggest that none of the contributors has given up on the potential for their research to generate positive change in or of the world, even as they confront the constraints and limitations within which they operate. In doing so, the authors remind us of the importance not just of identifying and challenging the complicity of the work of others but perhaps more importantly—yet with greater difficulty—of our own work in seeking "to undo persistent indignity, marginalization, and vio-

[10] In making this point, **Bakewell** draws an important distinction between the categories themselves and the politicization of the categories by state actors, and offers a reminder that "formal, public criteria for determining action introduces some element of accountability for states and prevents the most egregious bias. At minimum, it makes it possible for deviations from the criteria to be noticed and challenged."

lence towards refugees, as well as to people affected by both displacement and involuntary immobilities beyond this category" (**Brankamp and Weima**).

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The Resettlement Experiences of Oromo Women Who Entered Canada as Refugees

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature shows that gender-based experiences produce different circumstances for men and women who become refugees and thereafter. This article sought to contribute to this literature by investigating the challenges faced by Oromo women who have immigrated to Canada as refugees. Toward this end, we interviewed six Oromo women in Western Canada regarding what led them to leave Ethiopia, their experiences as refugees seeking asylum, and their struggles with resettlement and integration. The findings reveal that Oromo women share the challenges endured by their male counterparts, but also are victims of gender-based subjugation at each stage of emigration.

KEYWORDS

Oromo women; asylum seekers; migration and resettlement; intersectionality; gender dynamics

RESUMÉ

Une littérature de plus en plus importante démontre que les expériences genrées produisent des conditions différentes pour les hommes et les femmes qui deviennent réfugié.es et également par la suite. Cet article a cherché à contribuer à cette littérature en enquêtant sur les difficultés rencontrées par les femmes Oromo qui ont immigré au Canada en tant que réfugiées. À cette fin, nous avons mené des entrevues auprès de six femmes Oromo dans l'Ouest du Canada au sujet de ce qui les a amenées à quitter l'Éthiopie, leurs expériences comme réfugiées demandant l'asile, et leurs difficultés en matière de réinstallation et d'intégration. Les résultats démontrent que les femmes Oromo partagent les difficultés rencontrées par leurs homologues masculins, mais sont aussi victimes de subjugation fondée sur le genre à chaque étape de l'émigration.

INVESTIGATING THE EMIGRATION EXPERIENCE

Resettlement is often thought of as an end of the emigration experience and a beginning of re/building a stable existence. Although immigration offers refugees a chance to build new lives, the adversities that refugees experience can persist even years after resettlement. Previous studies have shown that resettlement in a new country results in considerable anxiety and a period of adjust-

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ment and integration (Kumsa, 2005, 2006; Pittaway et al., 2009). Refugees are frequently confronted with the loss of cultural values, religious practices, and support systems (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Stewart et al., 2010). Additionally, refugees may struggle with procuring adequate employment (Creese & Wiebe, 2012), securing safe and affordable housing (Sherrell et al., 2007), and accessing services (Makwarimba et al., 2013).

This research was prompted by an interest in understanding the emigration and resettlement experiences of Oromo women who came to Canada as refugees. From freedom fighters to mothers, Oromo women have always played active roles in the Oromo community in Ethiopia. For example, Ethiopian women fought alongside their male counterparts as front-line combatants in the quest to defeat Mengistu's Derg military dictatorship, which was known for its violent "Red Terror" campaign (1977–79) (Veale, 2003). The prolonged war was exacerbated by famine and drought and took the lives of many innocent civilians between 1983 and 1985 (Henze, 2000). The violence abated somewhat for the next six years, and in 1991 the Derg regime was finally demobilized (Veale, 2003).

In the post-Derg era, many Oromo people living in Ethiopia continued to report political, economic, and ethnic oppression (Hassen, 2002; Gudina, 2007). The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had been critical of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, a political coalition reported to be dominated by the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), for its systematic targeting of Oromo people (Tronvoll, 2008). According to well-documented reports, for example the UN committee which monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Oromo people have been victim of "summary executions, rape of women and girls, arbitrary detention, torture, humiliations and destruction of property and crops." In addition, notes Jalata (2005) "the Ethiopian government has a history of using state terrorism to commit genocide on the Oromo and other Indigenous peoples" (p. 87). These conditions are recognized as constituting persecution under the 1951 Refugee Convention (Caux, 2011; UNHCR, 2011) and support the Oromos' right to seek asylum in other countries.

When recounting their experiences as refugees, women almost uniformly report harrowing realities. A growing body of literature shows that refugee women suffer disproportionately (1) in situations that cause flight from their homelands as well as when they are in transit (Dauvergne, 2006); (2) in refugee camps (Beswick, 2001); and (3) as "urban refugees" awaiting processing (Jacobsen, 2006, p. 273). As LaViolette (2007) explains, refugee women have been persecuted for transgressing gender norms and frequently become victims of gender-based violence. Studies show how trauma caused by gender-based violence can make it difficult for refugee women to adjust to a new home country, even though they do not always bear physical scars of their abuse (Bartolomei et al., 2014; Berman et al., 2006).

Other research (Hyman et al., 2004, 2008; McSpadden & Moussa, 1993) conducted in North America suggests that it is particularly difficult for men when they immigrate, when compared to their female counterparts. For example, one study utilized qualitative interviews and focus groups with 25 married, separated, and divorced Ethiopian newcomers, to explore the effects of post-migration changes on marital relationships (Hyman et al., 2008). The authors note that "for many

of the male participants, migration was associated with downward status mobility and a loss of status and authority in the family" (p. 154), while women were described as having achieved some upward mobility, particularly in independence and autonomy. For some, the changes in status were said to create marital conflict, increase the occurrence of intimate partner violence, and generate changes in communication that often led to a relationship breakup (Hyman et al., 2008).

McSpadden & Moussa (1993)qualitative study of gender, identity, and resettlement of Ethiopian/Eritrean immigrants in North America corroborates the potentially negative effects of status difference on family dynamics. Similar to Hyman et al. (2008), they found evidence of status decline and limited opportunities for men, which precipitated shame, depression, and even suicide. McSpadden & Moussa (1993) note that for men, "this decline was most severely experienced around jobs and the education necessary to obtain desired, hopeful employment and status" (p. 222). Conversely, women did not report the same status decline, as they were inclined to view their new environment as providing more opportunities, particularly for advancing their education (McSpadden & Moussa, 1993).

Findings from these studies typify a facile narrative that immigrant women become positively transformed post-resettlement (Hyman et al., 2008; McSpadden & Moussa, 1993). The post-migration experience is portrayed as being emancipating, and difficult or even undesirable for men as compared to women. The narrative alludes to the notion that a change in geographical context (e.g., flight from home country to a democracy) ultimately precipitates gender liberation for immigrant women, particularly women who immigrate from predominantly Muslim countries.

We use a qualitative exploration of Oromo immigrant women's lives to highlight the limits of this narrative. We argue that the attention to status difference and liberation for immigrant women obscures a more complete understanding of Oromo women's gendered lives. By maintaining a focus on the post-immigrant experience, the gender-liberation narrative downplays how gender dynamics shape the lives of former refugee women in enduring ways. Significantly, by doing so, it camouflages the ongoing roles that gender plays in women's everyday struggles. Studies that examined the experiences of Oromo refugee women resettled in the United States found that pre-migration traumas inflicted on refugee women exacerbate their post-migration stress (Jaranson et al., 2004; Robertson et al., 2006). Our aim is to elaborate upon and contribute to this work by exploring all phases of the emigration journey, which could provide a more holistic context for understanding the resettlement experiences of refugee women.

To illustrate these points, our article draws on qualitative interviews with privately- and government-sponsored Oromo refugee women who arrived in different chronological waves of settlement. We explore women's gendered lives in three phases: before they left their homes; while they were waiting to come to Canada; and post-resettlement. The juxtaposition of these different phases not only upholds the usual insight that gendered conditions in Canada are vastly better when compared with previous gender-based hardships, but, more importantly, allows us to see how women's earlier experiences of gender oppression are not just left behind after arriving in Canada.

RESEARCH METHODS

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our research was motivated by the idea that refugees' own voices are an important part of scholarship, and we were concerned by the silences surrounding Oromo women's voices. Our theoretical approach was guided by intersectionality. As advanced by Crenshaw (1989, 1991), intersectionality is a multi-axis framework that can account for numerous aspects of identity markers and discrimination. Intersectionality rebuffs homogenous narratives by challenging single-axis frameworks that artificially prioritize one identity marker. Single stories of oppression erase and obscure the multiplicity of discrimination faced by those who embody marginalized social positions, such as refugee women. Considering women simply as women may not fully capture the circumstances they face; intersectional approaches encourage us to consider the multiplicative effect of each new source of potential discrimination (e.g., skin colour, religion, and/or poverty) (Aberman, 2014; Crenshaw, 1991; Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001). An intersectional lens foregrounds a multi-dimensional analysis highlighting women's narratives that have largely been excluded. To honour an intersectional approach, we decided to use a qualitative, inductive methodology that allowed participants to talk about their own experiences in their own words. Our principal method was open-ended interviews (discussed below).

Sample

We sought participation from Oromo women who had immigrated to Canada as refugees. A member of an Oromo women's group, who was part of the first author's social network, helped identify and mobilize participants for the study. Six women between the ages of 18 and 50 who lived in Western Canada were interviewed.[1] The participants in the study came to Canada from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia between 1989 and 2013. All of the women were involved with their local Oromo-Canadian diasporic community. They shared similar socio-political, economic, and historical backgrounds, but were diverse in other respects. For example, some had fled an active war, while others sought refuge from the ongoing and residual effects of the century-long war launched against the Oromo people by Ethiopian officials. Most of the participants did not know their real ages, so the ages listed in Table 1 are their estimates.

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

Participant pseudonym	Age	Years in Canada
Faynet	50	23
Deka	49	12
Kuleeni	42	8
Muna	21	4
Hamilee	18	4
Rinas	22	1

The Role of Ethics

Given the fragile political contexts that refugees come from, the ongoing violence linked to their places of origin, and the impact this has on their lives in countries of resettlement, the participants' social location was of particular importance to our ethical considerations. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) identify two dimensions of ethics in research studies: (1) "procedural ethics"—which include the processes involved in

[1] The participants were this age at the time of the interviews.

gaining the approval of bodies that govern ethics; and (2) "ethics in practice"—which entail the day-to-day ethical considerations that researchers address throughout their research (pp. 263–265). Formal ethics approval was granted by the Research Ethics Board (REB) responsible for overseeing the research project. Although formal ethics approval is oriented to the question of potential harm, as well as consent and transparency, our guidelines also considered the question of ethics more broadly, as it relates to culturally and politically appropriate protocols.

As an Oromo person and member of the Oromo diaspora in Canada, the first author was familiar with the norms customarily followed to seek entry and conclude engagements with Oromo communities. Having this practical knowledge led her to believe that typical REB protocols, such as providing debriefing sessions to ensure well-being or offering information on psychological services, would not be most suitable for the target population. The distress protocols used included monitoring participants' emotional reactions, providing breaks when participants appeared upset, and holding space when participants wanted to articulate their emotions. Given the first author's own social location as a researcher and member of the Oromo diaspora, she felt doubly responsible for upholding higher ethical standards than bioethics; she was responsible for protecting and representing a population with whom she identified. These approaches served to mitigate concerns about non-maleficence.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Because we wanted to document Oromo women's views of their own experiences, we chose interviews as the best method to capture the viewpoints, experiences, beliefs, and motivations of women who came to Canada as refugees. Every effort was made to encourage participants to share stories and to honour their voices. Interviews were conducted as participant-led dialogues. While we were interested in their perspectives on the conditions that led them to leave Ethiopia and seek refuge, how they negotiated and navigated asylum-seeking processes, and what their lives have been like since they resettled in Canada, questions were open-ended and used only to prompt discussions about the three phases of emigration. Thereby participants were given the opportunity for direct dialogue about what mattered to them.

All interviews were conducted in person by the first author in 2014 at a time and location chosen by each participant. Interviews lasted between one and two hours, and all were recorded with the participants' verbal consent. Three interviews were conducted in Oromo, two involved a mixture of Oromo and English, and one was conducted fully in English.

Each interview was transcribed with any Oromo translated to English by the first author. An inductive approach inspired by grounded theory was taken to coding, which allowed concepts, ideas, and meanings to evolve from the data (Palys & Atchison, 2013). The qualitative research software NVivo was utilized to aid in the compilation and management of the data. Fifty-eight codes and sub-codes and core themes were identified, which became the basis for integrating the data, performing in-depth data analysis, and developing a storyline.

In the sections that follow, we document the three focal phases in women's lives that we explored: life in their homeland before they left, fleeing the homeland, and post-settlement in Canada. Our intersectional approach led us to identify a unique set

of challenges linked to women's individual (i.e., age, family structure, and marital status) and shared (i.e., gender, social class, and socio-political context of forced migration) social locations, which profoundly influenced their emigration experiences. Using women's own words, we highlight the intersectional themes that help substantiate the multiplicative effect of social locations, and how they have shaped women's experiences throughout the three phases of their journey.

HOW DO OROMO WOMEN BECOME REFUGEES?

Oromo men have been subjected to unimaginable torture while detained, including having heavy water-filled jugs secured to their testes, being thrown into pits before being lit on fire, and being buried alive ((Fossati et al., 1996). Oromo women, too, have been tortured and terrorized. They have had bottles and poles shoved into their vaginas (Fossati et al., 1996), and pregnant women have been beaten and killed (Jalata, 2005). Even Oromo children have not been spared from persecution (Jalata, 2005).

Our participants recalled experiences consistent with Jalata's(2005) revelations. Deka, for example, described the first time that the TPLF came to her family home in search of her husband:

> I was 9 months pregnant and the TPLF soldier [a member of Ethiopian security forces] was around my house. One guy came and knocked [on] my door at about 3 am…. I don't know, but it was more than midnight. He asked where my husband was, and I told him [he was] sleeping. I asked him if he wanted me to wake him up and he said no and proceeded to look around the house. He then took my husband and came back and asked me where the gun was, and that my husband had told him that there was a gun inside the house. He said, "Your husband said to give it to us" [and I responded] "But we don't have anything." He tried to trick us. And he took my husband to jail. I was very shocked and upset that time and 2 or 3 days later I delivered a dead baby.

Deka felt that the death of her baby was a direct result of the fear and shock that she experienced when the TPLF harassed and detained her husband. As Kuleeni recalled, "There are so many Oromo children that are perishing due to this war [against Oromos]…. What about the time when they would capture Oromo women and cut off their breast so that their children would have no milk to drink from?" Ethiopian officials' history of colonization and systematic oppression of Oromo people had no limits and was without mercy (Bulcha, 2011; Hassen, 2015; Jalata, 1996; Jalata & Schaffer, 2013).

Both Faynet and Kuleeni shared their experiences of the war launched against the Oromo people when Ethiopia was under Mengistu's Derg regime. In the following excerpt, Faynet described her experiences as a young girl in Ethiopia who was a victim of the Red Terror campaign of the seventies. She became separated from her family and was unable to return to her village because of the civil war. Those who could escape scattered and simply kept on going:

> When they open that [bazooka] fire, people leave everything they have on the ground [and] on the floor and what they are doing, and everybody is running for their lives. That's the time I ran with the people who was running. [At] that time I left, we ran to another farm. And from the farm to another village. From another village…. We didn't stop. We kept going. When the fight starts, day and night, they don't stop. They open fire and fight and fight and fight and fight and fight. When they fight you just try to find a place to run. A safe place to go.

Ad hoc familial groups of people were drawn together by common fate and walked together on what Faynet recalled as a 3-week to 1-month journey to Somalia. There was death and destruction all around them and throughout the trip.

> Most of the people I didn't know. I took up with them and … whatever we got, food or water, whatever we got, the day we had food we eat, the day we didn't have food we didn't eat. We passed so many dead people. On top of us there were airplanes throwing bombs on us. Running away from that. During the daytime we hide in the bushes so the airplanes, they don't see you. During the day you hide under the bushes and under the trees. The big[gest] trees you find, during the day you hide under there and you don't come out. Because the airplanes, they don't think that a group of people are going. The military are sitting there, and they just throw the bombs and kill people. So many people die like that. During the nighttime we keep walking.

Kuleeni took a different path. After seeing her family killed off by Ethiopian officials, she felt obligated to uphold her family name by joining the ongoing Oromo struggle for freedom and peace. Her story exemplifies the roles that she and other Oromo women played in the armed resistance:

> I was growing up and being raised as this [conflict] was going on, and I was responsible, with others, to make and carry food on our backs to the resistance group. They [members of the resistance] were afraid of the Derg because they [the Derg] would suspect male adults, but they wouldn't suspect small children and women [and that's why it became our job to transport food]…When the Amharic-speaking [Ethiopian officials] would come and check your house, they would steal breast milk and drink it. They would hit the kids, throw them out, and step on them. We were left with no choice but to pick up guns and defend ourselves.

However, repercussions for her involvement were severe. She and a male and female friend were apprehended. The man was shot on the spot, while the women were incarcerated. As Kuleeni recalled,

> After being locked up for eight years … I finally had my day in court. They asked me if I had ever killed anyone, and I said that I never did. As I stood in court I remember being at the end of my life, as my health had derailed so significantly. I had gastric issues before I was ever incarcerated and then suffered from all kinds of aches and pains from the beatings and trauma that I received while in prison, which received minimal to no medical treatment.

Although Oromo people experience structural oppression, Oromo women suffered disproportionately during armed conflicts. In part, this is a consequence of the gender-based inequalities that are firmly rooted in patriarchal cultures and societies, then exacerbated in politically unstable environments. For example, participants in the study noted that girls were more disadvantaged than boys because of gender-role expectations. Deka recalled being told that "no girls are allowed to attend school outside.… That is shameful for parents and for the girls." Several participants addressed how the social construction of gender manifested in the oppression of Oromo people:

> I never had education because back home mostly I grew in a family without a father. My mother raised us. So that time we had difficulty to go to, especially the girls, me and my sisters had difficulty to go to school because we had to help my mother with taking care of the rest of my brothers and sisters.… Back home … the women [are] just for the kids and the housewife.
>
> *(Faynet)*

Although the boys who did make it to school faced political realities they resented—not being allowed to speak Oromo, for example, and being forced to adopt Amharic, the language of an ethnolinguistic majority group that dominated the Ethiopian government—many were able to gain political agency through their higher level of education. Although all people are affected by conflict and displacement, girls' and women's lack of education, with its concurrent lack of political agency, sets them up for a life in which they have limited hope for upward mobility. The combination of structural oppression

and social constraints embedded in gender socialization is instrumental in determining how women become refugees.

BEING A REFUGEE

Most participants in this study followed unplanned migration routes, which landed them in different countries and in temporary settlements. Rinas was the only participant whose country of first asylum was Canada. Deka, Hamilee, and Kuleeni went to Kenya before settling in Canada, while Muna went east to Somalia. Faynet went to multiple countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, before resettling in Canada as her final destination. These locations did not always provide the women with a safe haven.

Living as a Foreigner

Refugees often find themselves jumping from the frying pan into the fire—escaping from one unstable and insecure environment, only to land in another. Sometimes their escape is followed by time spent in the limbo of refugee camps; Benjamin (1998) and Beswick (2001) found these journeys to be particularly horrendous for refugee women, with beatings, sexual assault, and other violence occurring frequently and always a threat. Many refugees prefer to live in urban areas to avoid camps. Although urban spaces may provide refugees with greater autonomy and economic opportunities, refugees who live in these settings also face a host of vulnerabilities including marginalization and exclusion, limited access to aid and other resources, and a lack of legal rights and protection (Grabska, 2006; Jacobsen, 2006; Landau, 2006). All participants felt fortunate to have avoided the camps, but still experienced hardship while living in urban contexts.

For example, Deka recalled what life was like for her and her family when they took refuge in neighbouring Kenya:

> We left [for] Nairobi to save our lives…. But even in Kenya, the situation was very bad. For female refugees particularly, the police would stop us and demand money from us. Because we don't have a [refugee] status and we stayed there as refugees [seeking asylum] illegally, we had no choice but to pay them off or they would rape, beat, and kill us.

During this limbo period in another country, women often opted to live in urban areas, connect with pre-existing social networks, and search for menial work to support themselves. As Kuleeni recollected,

> I was able to find some work cleaning and make very little money; still, I had nowhere to sleep or stay permanently. I didn't have shoes. Pillow. Blanket. I remembered the time when someone gave me a blanket, I felt rich. Someone else bought me shoes. Someone else donated a mattress to me. Oh boy! I was very happy.

Although Kuleeni had a hard time while in exile, she was at least able to join a pre-existing Oromo community and attain some support from its members.

Hamilee, who moved to Kenya with extended family members as a young girl, reported that her experience of waiting in a host country was positive. She valued the freedom to practise her Oromo culture and recalled how much she appreciated this aspect of her life while living as a foreigner in Kenya. Her experience of living as a refugee may have been more positive than that of other participants because she was a child without the responsibilities of the adults who cared for her.

Rite of Passage and Web of Secrets: Ad Hoc Families

After fleeing their homes, all but one participant reported becoming entangled in a

web of secrets. Participants assumed new identities by joining what we refer to as "ad hoc families" to expedite and secure refugee resettlement in Canada. To create ad hoc families, women needed new documents and new stories or facts that were consistent with those new identities. Women described how they kept secrets as a mechanism of survival; though some documents or stories might be contrived, the realities behind the need to flee their homes were authentic.

An important gender dimension governed how women became enmeshed in the web of secrets. Heads of households—fathers, brothers, uncles, and husbands—told the women what to say and how to use their new identities. As the women lacked autonomy in their families and communities and were afraid that their claims would be rejected, they did what they were told. Several reports have concluded that restrictive policies force migrants to use illegal and dangerous means of entry, underscoring how women and children are at particular risk of exploitation (Morrison et al., 2001; HumanRightsWatch et al., 2001). For example, Faynet and her four children made it to their destination in Europe, which was their final stop before permanently resettling in Canada, by using fake passports. Before her stay in Europe, Faynet was in the Middle East with her husband and children. There the police were ready to deport them to Ethiopia for being undocumented, regardless of the fact this would put their lives in danger. Faynet's husband felt there was no choice but to obtain fake passports if their family were to survive.

> During that time, he tried to find a passport for myself and my children so we can leave from there as soon as possible, because we knew that we would not get a citizen[ship status] right away … like a fake passport and ahhhh we found a passport. It wasn't like fake fake, it was a Somalia lady who had a passport and she gave us the passport. We put my photo and my children's photos [in it].

She did as her husband instructed and fled with her four children while her husband stayed behind to work. Upon landing in Europe, Faynet discarded the fake passports and applied for asylum. The upshot, however, was that she was a single mother to four children living in a foreign country, with absolutely no support system. Faynet's husband joined the family a year later.

Hamilee and Rinas had different stories. They were accepted into Canada's refugee resettlement program as daughters of an ad hoc family. When the interviewer asked Hamilee, "Do you have any family in Canada?" she first asked whether it was safe to reveal a secret. Then she told the interviewer, "They are not my real family. They are just my fake dad and my fake mom, and I just came as if they are my parents." These revelations were not entirely surprising. The first author had been privy to such stories before but did not know what led to such situations or their implications for refugees. Hamilee described her role—rehearsing and memorizing her ad hoc family's stories and learning to keep their secrets—and what was at stake:

> I had to go for many interviews, and to come to Canada it took such a long time … they want to know everything: what kinds of problems we experienced back home, why we felt that we needed to leave the country, and why we couldn't go back, etc. They interviewed me every day … of course it is scary. Sometimes you forget. Each visit that I had with them I would rehearse the story, because we knew that we were lying so it would have been easy to forget. If we were telling the truth, it would have been easy to recall the story, but 90% of it was a lie. I especially told many lies, that I was an only child, that I had no other family other than them, that they were my parents. However, it is true that there are so many problems in Ethiopia.

Hamilee's experience reveals just how difficult and onerous it was for the women to keep secrets. The lives of her fake mother and father also were dependent on her keeping her story straight, because any slip-up would affect their resettlement determination.

The situation for Rinas was similar. She explained that she was assigned the role of daughter in her ad hoc family after plans for another individual to do so did not work out: "My fake father had a space on his paper and that's how I got to go with him to Canada. The group I came with … one was his fake wife, and two people as his wife's siblings." When Rinas learned that Canada had accepted her, her uncle shouted, "Be happy that you won the lottery, Rinas." The interviewer asked Rinas, "When you found out, did your uncle ask you if you wanted to go?" And she said, "He did not ask me. Like I said, it was a tough household, so I was too afraid to say anything otherwise…. I was thinking that I would be going to Kenya. I didn't even know." She had not even known that Canada was considering her, and "within a few weeks they told me that I would be leaving for Canada. I was not even ready."

Some refugees had to weave a web of secrets in order to achieve refugee status by, for example, "replacing" real family members lost to the war against Oromos. One must appreciate the generosity and risk assumed by those refugee families who willingly offered others the opportunity to join them. Nevertheless, joining an ad hoc family had consequences for participants. For women, joining an ad hoc family prevented them from being able to sponsor their real families, whom they left behind, and they cited this as a major barrier to their resettlement. In Hamilee's words, "I can't even say I'd like to sponsor my mother since I already have a mother here…. I can't even sponsor my cousins because my 'dad' told a lot of different stories about his family perishing. So I just sit down and cry." Ultimately, when some women in our study landed in Canada, they had to bear the daunting reality that they would never live with their real families again, perhaps never even see them again.

Participants described how challenging it was to live as a refugee. Though they avoided refugee camps and the violence that can accompany them, often what happened during their period of being a refugee marked them for life. Despite the fact that women had suffered gravely for being Oromo in Ethiopia and could not return without threat to their lives, finding the option to resettle in Canada was not easy. Indeed, many were forced to sacrifice their connections to husbands, parents, siblings, and cousins to be able to migrate.

From Refugee to Citizen

Refugee women had to begin to shape their lives around resettlement long before they arrived in Canada. As a growing body of literature demonstrates (Labman, 2019; Labman et al., 2020), the process of applying for and gaining access to Canada's refugee resettlement program is long and arduous. Case in point, the Canadian government rejected Faynet and her family's application for resettlement to Canada because "[of] too many children and [they] don't accept big family" (Faynet). She became unexpectedly pregnant shortly after being rejected by the Canadian government. This led her to have an abortion because she was so concerned that an increase to her family size would forever prevent her family from being sponsored. While they were eventually resettled to Canada through private sponsorship, Faynet deeply regrets the abortion, which was done out of necessity rather than desire.

Preparing for Resettlement to Canada

The process of unbecoming a refugee begins with the orientation stage, which happens overseas. According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), refugee newcomers are offered orientation services abroad to help them better understand life in Canada and make informed resettlement decisions (IRCC, 2019). Interestingly, only the government-assisted refugees (Muna, Hamilee, Rinas, and Kuleeni) attended an orientation; Faynet and Deka did not have this opportunity as privately sponsored refugees.

The orientations that Muna, Hamilee, Rinas, and Kuleeni attended lasted two to three days, and the women described similar experiences. When the interviewer asked them what they learned, Hamilee recalled being told that "Canada is really cold…. They told us to use the heater" and "that we had to respect our neighbours or that they [the neighbours] would call the police." Rinas said

> I [was told that I] needed to look for work because work will not come looking for me; and to look for work at various places and in the newspapers … that Canada is not a big deal so don't take it as if it is a big deal. That Canada may be for me or it may not … and they told us that there are problems in Canada.

The government that funds these services appeared to believe that several days is sufficient to give refugees the support they need to adapt to Canadian life—more specifically, basic information about geography, weather, and people, employment, education, and the law. These basics are certainly important, but they do not underscore the broader social issues that mark Canadian societies (e.g., illiteracy, poverty, racial discrimination, unemployment, and other social ills). Given the conditions and realities that the women escaped, and all the optimistic information they were given about Canada, one would expect them to find their new lives easier and better. As we discuss below, this was not the case for the women in our study.

Prospects in Canada

When the interviewer asked the participants, "What could have better assisted you in the resettlement and integration process?," their thoughts and reflections were surprising. Faynet and Deka, who were privately sponsored, had a view of the resettlement process that was very different from Kuleeni, Muna, Hamilee, and Rinas, all of whom were government-sponsored refugees and had fewer challenges. These differences in difficulty may also reflect the fact that the former two had been settled in Canada longer than the latter four. Faynet, who was first among the participants to come to Canada, said,

> Even if the church brings you or the government brings you, there should always be a place for newcomers that they can prepare them … to let them know you are going to face these kinds of problems … this is our culture … don't be afraid … don't be surprised you are going to face this kind of stuff and this kind of stuff … this is the Canadian way. Everything. They should prepare you a little bit instead of on your own, suffering. At least [so] you don't face big things on your own, especially when you are a single mom.

She expressed feeling underprepared for navigating the challenges and uncertainties of life as a newcomer. These anxieties were particularly heightened when her husband left, and she became responsible for raising six children on her own.

Faynet shared her perspective that "in Canada, when refugees come for the first time, most separate or divorce or those kinds of stuff" and that "mostly the women [are made to] suffer with the children and culture and everything." Likewise, Deka recalled being abandoned by her husband, who was displeased about his loss of status in Canada.

She explained how he would say to her, "Did you bring me here to be a slave?" (Deka). One day he "said that he wasn't feeling good … and that he would go and come back. He never came back though" (Deka). She recounted, "With seven kids, life was very tough. Being a mother and a father after my husband left. Life was so very tough." Both Faynet and Deka spoke in detail about the challenges they experienced with raising children in a foreign country with limited social and economic support. Faynet, who survived a civil war, trekked across multiple countries in search of refuge, and lost her first child all while she was a teenager, expressed through tears how none of her previous hardships compared to the suffering she experienced with resettling to Canada.

The world has changed drastically since Faynet and Deka were sponsored to Canada. Faynet was in the first wave of Africans seeking resettlement after Canada formally recognized refugees as a designated class of immigrants in Canadian law (Canadian Council for Refugees, n.d.). By amending previous immigration policies, which were classist, exploitative, and racist, the Immigration Act of 1976 permitted a significant number of non-European refugees to seek refuge in Canada (Dirks, 2020; Green & Green, 2004). Immigration from Africa grew exponentially during the 1980s and 1990s (Troper, 2021). Like Faynet, those who were among the first wave did not have pre-existing communities to join and had to form new communities amongst themselves. Even if Canadian communities had space for them and were willing to welcome them, these early reception communities did not have the resources or knowledge to successfully integrate a new population.

As Canadian society became more inclusive and pluralistic, subsequent waves of African refugees admitted into Canada's refugee resettlement program may have had an easier time. The Canada in which Kuleeni, Muna, Hamilee, and Rinas arrived (in 2006, 2010, 2010, and 2013, respectively) was different from the one Faynet and Deka came to (in 1989 and 2002, respectively). Changes in Canadian society, including the growth of diasporic communities of former refugees, could help to explain why participants who arrived later did not experience as much difficulty undergoing resettlement and integration. Differences in how they expressed their integration experiences may also be attributed to the ways in which they were sponsored (Hynie et al., 2019).

Regardless of when they arrived, participants shared similar, limited economic prospects in Canada. For the most part, they lacked sufficient education and the employment skills necessary to compete in the Canadian marketplace. Beiser (2003) found that pre-migration educational levels were associated with resettlement success. Five of the six women had received some formal education in their homeland (though less than what was typical for men), yet generally their formal educational achievement was minimal. At the time of the interviews, four of the women worked full-time in the cleaning industry and frequently juggled part-time jobs as well. Rinas was struggling to find employment, and Deka had worked only briefly since resettling in Canada because she had ongoing health problems. Not only were Faynet, Deka, and Muna responsible for financially supporting their children, they also felt obligated to support family members in their homeland—sometimes caring for an entire village. We deduce that gender-based dynamics, which limited their opportunities for formal education, coupled with personal and familial obligations, compromised their employability prospects for better paying and more rewarding jobs.

An intersectional lens allows us to analyze and understand how life-long gender dynamics play out so that refugee women remain at the margins of their new society. Anti-Oromo oppression (Gudina , 2007; Hassen, 2002; Jalata, 2005) and patriarchal culture colluded to isolate the Oromo women in our sample from educational opportunities in Ethiopia. Their lack of formal education and experience, coupled with their identities as mothers and former refugees, made it difficult for them to find rewarding and useful employment. As Kumsa (2005; 2006) has found, Oromos who come to Canada as refugees construct new identities and develop fluid ways to belong, but traumas from their earlier oppressions can continue to define their lives (Jaranson et al., 2004; Robertson et al., 2006). For us, this raises the question about refugee men making headlines when they lose their upward mobility, while there are fewer stories on refugee women who have limited access to education or careers. In the same vein, refugee women are portrayed as being emancipated. We in Canada and academia should not be so content with the idea that refugee women are liberated, despite having limited opportunities for formal education or upward mobility.

Countering Remarginalization: A Discussion

Counter to studies that imply women become enfranchised after resettlement (Hyman et al., 2008; McSpadden & Moussa, 1993), the findings in this study suggest that the intersections between national origin, gender, and social class create conditions that set up refugee women to have limited opportunities for upward mobility. In this regard, the system has failed them by virtue of remarginalization. Although the women in this study were safer in Canada and did not live in fear of a bomb flying through their window, they remained relegated to society's margins. Those who were employed held multiple menial jobs for survival, and the demands of their gendered lives thwarted opportunities to upgrade education and advance career skills. Their primary hope was for their children to enjoy more of the rewards that Canadian society has to offer.

Accordingly, future studies should investigate the prospects for upward mobility among children of former refugee women. What implications do the realities of former refugee women have on second- and third-generation immigrants? Are the experiences transposed onto the children of former refugees, who then internalize them and transpose them again onto their children? This may explain some of the difficulties plaguing young African immigrants living in Canada. Finally, there has to be a better way for former refugees to attain upward mobility.

Notwithstanding all the hardship that the women in this study had endured, they expressed genuine gratitude toward Canada. Faynet, Kuleeni, and Muna specifically appreciated opportunities for language training, economic stability, ability to send remittances, access to health care, and women's empowerment. Likely the women did not criticize the system because they compared their lives in Canada to their earlier times of hardship. Conversely, as an Oromo-Canadian raised in the Oromo diaspora in Canada, the first author is aware of the possibilities and benefits of dreaming for a better Canada and engendering change for a new wave of refugee women. In other words, we do not require our participants to change their perspectives, but we challenge society to transform in a way that perceives women's gendered needs differently. Here we see how intersectional approaches can help our

understanding of refugee women's experiences.

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Soutenir sa famille en contexte de migration forcée en tant que femme syrienne établie au Québec et au Liban: entre vulnérabilités et responsabilités ambivalentes

Myriam Richard

RÉSUMÉ

Même si elle s'avère une pierre angulaire de l'accès à la protection, la vulnérabilité des femmes réfugiées fait rarement l'objet d'une définition allant au-delà de son sens commun - le risque de subir un préjudice. Cet article présente les résultats d'une recherche empirique où huit récits de vie ont été recueillis auprès de femmes réfugiées syriennes responsables du soutien de leur famille au Liban (cinq) et au Québec (trois). Une analyse mobilisant le concept de vulnérabilité ambivalente (Oliviero, 2016) a montré que les femmes et leurs proches se trouvent certes exposés à des formes d'adversité, mais également à des opportunités transformatrices et à des éléments de continuités de leurs trajectoires de vie.

MOTS CLÉS

Femmes réfugiées, responsabilitédu soutien de la famille, vulnérabilité, féminisme transnational, Syrie

ABSTRACT

Although the vulnerability of refugee women is a cornerstone of access to protection, it is rarely defined beyond its common-sense meaning - the risk of suffering harm. This article presents the results of an empirical research inquiry into the life histories of eight Syrian women who were responsible for supporting their families in Lebanon (five) and Québec (three). Using the concept of ambivalent vulnerability (Oliviero, 2016), the analysis showed that women and their relatives were certainly exposed to forms of adversity, but also to transformative opportunities and to elements of continuity with their life trajectories.

INTRODUCTION

La réflexion qui sous-tend cet article est née du constat de l'ubiquité de l'emploi de la notion de vulnérabilité par les instances de gouvernance de la migration forcée[1] telles que le Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés (HCR), sans que cette notion ne soit réellement définie au-delà des conceptions de sens commun – le risque de subir un préjudice - et de son usage comme outil de mesure de la précarité socioéconomique (Janmyr et Mourad, 2018; Soulet, 2005).[2] Elle s'appuie sur les résultats d'une démarche de recherche empirique visant à documenter les expériences de femmes réfugiées en provenance de Syrie appartenant à un groupe ciblé

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[1] J'emploie le terme de « migration forcée » en étant consciente des limites inhérentes à une conception binaire de la migration comme étant « volontaire » ou « forcée », qui se situe plutôt sur un continuum où les personnes prennent des décisions en considérant un ensemble de facteurs complexe et en constante évolution (Akesson et Coupland, 2018).

[2] Une tendance similaire s'observe également en travail social, où on parle fréquemment de populations vulnérables sans conceptualiser ce que cette vulnérabilité signifie au-delà du sens commun (Chatel et Roy, 2008; Soulet, 2005; Brown, Ecclestone, et Emmel, 2017).

comme étant particulièrement vulnérable puisque détenant la responsabilité principale du soutien financier et des soins au quotidien (*care*) de leur famille (HCR, 2014). Dans le cadre de cette recherche, la vulnérabilité est définie en tant qu'expérience intersubjective pouvant être vécue sur le plan physique, légal, psychologique, économique ou social (Gilson, 2014). Elle est plus spécifiquement conceptualisée à travers le prisme de la notion de vulnérabilité ambivalente (Oliviero, 2016). En cela, le présent article propose une conceptualisation féministe transnationale de la vulnérabilité des femmes réfugiées en tant qu'expérience les exposant certes à la souffrance, aux violences et aux marginalisations, mais également à des éléments de transformation et de continuité avec leur vie avant la migration forcée (Grace, 2019; Zeweri, 2017).

Il s'appuie en ce sens sur l'analyse de 8 entrevues de type récits de vie ayant donné la parole à 5 de ces femmes installées au Liban, un pays limitrophe à la Syrie et à 3 d'entre elles établies au Canada/Québec, un pays de réinstallation.[3] Ces deux sites ont été choisis en raison de leur importance respective dans l'accueil des personnes ayant dû fuir à cause de la récente guerre civile qui déchire le pays.[4] Les femmes rencontrées ont évoqué de nombreux enjeux à propos de leur quotidien en exil. L'un d'entre eux est toutefois ressorti comme étant particulièrement crucial - les impacts de la migration forcée sur les dynamiques familiales – et sera ici exploré à travers le prisme de la notion de vulnérabilité ambivalente.

Après avoir exposé brièvement la problématique de la recherche, je me tourne vers les apports théoriques ayant servi à reconsidérer la notion de vulnérabilité au-delà de son sens commun. Je présente ensuite un bref aperçu du cadre méthodologique de l'étude et j'expose les résultats de l'analyse des récits de vie qui m'amènent à conclure avec une invitation à ancrer les pratiques de recherche et d'intervention auprès des personnes réfugiées dans des cadres conceptuels et méthodologiques dynamiques, inclusifs et solidaires qui permettent de placer au centre la voix des premières concernées afin d'arriver à une prise en compte élargie de leurs expériences familiales en contexte de migration forcée.

PROBLÉMATIQUE

Depuis qu'il a éclaté au printemps 2011, le conflit syrien a entraîné le déplacement de plus de 13 millions de personnes, dont 6,7 millions à l'intérieur du pays et 6,6 millions à l'extérieur du pays (HCR, 2021b). Ces dernières se trouvent en majorité dans les pays limitrophes (Turquie, Liban et Jordanie) et dans une moindre mesure dans l'Union Européenne et les pays qui pratiquent la réinstallation de réfugiés comme le Canada. Les femmes et les filles sont de plus en plus nombreuses à être forcées de fuir leur pays d'origine et à être ciblées à travers diverses formes de violences, notamment sexuelles et sexistes (OIM, 2018). Ces dernières se manifestent à toutes les étapes de la migration forcée (Schmoll, 2020) et sont d'une intensité telle que certains observateurs considèrent que les femmes réfugiées constituent la population féminine la plus affectée par les violences faites aux femmes dans le monde

[3] Les résultats de cette recherche sont tirés d'un mémoire de maîtrise en travail social (Richard, 2019) qui s'inscrit au sein du projet de recherche « Femme, Syrienne et réfugiée : Être et devenir » mené par Roxane Caron (2017-2020). J'ai participé à toutes les étapes d'élaboration et de réalisation du projet en collaboration étroite avec la directrice du projet et du mémoire.

[4] Le présent article ne permet pas de revenir en détail sur l'historique du conflit syrien, ni des contextes de réception des réfugiés en provenance de Syrie sur les deux sites. Voir le mémoire de maîtrise duquel est tiré cet article pour plus de détails (Richard, 2019).

(HCR, 2021; Oliver, 2017).[5] La migration forcée a également des effets importants sur les relations que les femmes entretiennent avec leurs proches, tels que des changements dans les rôles au sein de la famille, l'éclatement de la cellule familiale traditionnelle, la dispersion dans différents pays et la prise en charge des responsabilités du soutien financier de la famille par les femmes (Akesson et Coupland; 2018; HCR, 2014; Grace, 2019; HCR, 2014; Madziva, 2016).

Les ménages soutenus par une femme[6] sont considérés comme étant particulièrement vulnérables par les instances de gouvernance de la migration forcée, dans la mesure où ils sont plus susceptibles de vivre en situation de précarité socioéconomique et qu'ils sont exposées à des risques spécifiques en situation de refuge (HCR, 2008; HCR, 2014; HCR, UNICEF, & PAM, 2019).[7] Ces instances évoquent aussi en parallèle l'importance de soutenir la résilience des femmes réfugiées et leur rôle en tant que « pilier » de la famille. Elles proposent ainsi la mise en œuvre d'un ensemble de mesures d'empowerment pour les accompagner dans le développement de stratégies et de capacités d'adaptation « positives » (Women's Refugee Commission, 2017) afin qu'elles puissent « […] augmenter leur pouvoir d'agir et amener des changements au sein de leurs foyers, de leurs communautés et éventuellement de leur pays » [traduction libre] (Zeweri, 2017, p. 441). Notons toutefois que ce type de conception du rôle des femmes doit être considéré avec prudence, dans la mesure où il risque non seulement de nier les formes d'oppression réelles qu'elles vivent, mais aussi de leur faire porter la responsabilité supplémentaire d'être des « moteurs de changement » au sein de leur famille et de la société, tout en maintenant les logiques selon lesquelles il leur revient d'assurer les soins quotidiens au sein de la famille. Je m'appuie ici sur la pensée critique de Vergès (2018) à propos du travail du *care* « […] considéré comme relevant de ce que les femmes doivent accomplir (sans se plaindre) depuis des siècles – le travail féminin de soin et de nettoyage [qui] constitue un travail gratuit » (p. 8).[8]

Malgré l'abondance de documentation, il demeure nécessaire de donner la parole à ces femmes afin de combler ce que Freedman (2017) identifie comme un manque de compréhension de ce que la vulnérabilité signifie pour différentes femmes réfugiées à travers les frontières de classe, de nationalité, d'âge, de « race »[9] ou d'orientation sexuelle. Sortir des représentations binaires de victime et de combattante (Caron, Damant, et Flynn, 2017) s'avère particulièrement important pour le développement de pratiques d'accompagnement et de protection adaptées aux réalités présentes et passées des femmes réfugiées et de leurs proches (Zew-

[5]Les violences faites aux femmes et aux enfants ont considérablement augmenté depuis le début de la pandémie mondiale de COVID-19 et ont augmenté les facteurs de risque et de vulnérabilité auxquels ceux et celles forcés de se déplacer étaient déjà exposés (HCR, 2021a).

[6]Traduction libre de « Women head of household » qui est le terme généralement utilisé par le HCR.

[7]Le HCR estimait que 20% à 30% des ménages réfugiés syriens recensés au Liban, en Jordanie et en Égypte étaient soutenus par une femme (HCR, 2014).

[8]Notons aussi que certaines des femmes rencontrées occupaient un travail rémunéré qui relevait également des soins et du nettoyage, ou qu'elles s'appuyaient sur le travail des soins d'autres femmes pour pouvoir occuper un emploi (ex. la grand-mère qui prend soin de ses petits-enfants pendant que sa fille travaille à l'extérieur). Ces différentes intersections auraient été particulièrement intéressantes à explorer, mais ne font pas l'objet de la présente démarche.

[9]La notion de « race » est ici mise entre guillemets pour signifier la nécessaire prise de recul critique puisqu'elle n'a aucun fondement biologique, mais détient encore un pouvoir à travers le processus politique, social et mental d'altérisation que (Guillaumin, 1972) identifie en tant que racisation. Selon (Pierre, 2021), le fait d'être racisé « […] met en évidence le caractère socialement construit des différences et de leur essentialisation, les rapports de pouvoir à l'œuvre quand la société dominante racisante s'arroge la capacité de définir et de désigner "l'Autre" » (p. 21).

eri, 2017; Taha, 2020). La section suivante pose un jalon en ce sens, en faisant appel à des apports théoriques visant à élargir les contours de la notion vulnérabilité, et par le fait même, son potentiel analytique (Soulet, 2005).

AU-DELÀ DU SENS COMMUN : DE MULTIPLES CONCEPTUALISATIONS DE LA VULNÉRABILITÉ

Tel que décrit précédemment, cette recherche conçoit la vulnérabilité en tant qu'expérience intersubjective pouvant être vécue au plan physique, légal, psychologique, économique ou social (Gilson, 2014). Cette conceptualisation s'appuie sur trois principaux courants épistémologiques que j'expose dans les lignes qui suivent.

Le premier est celui des travaux sur la vulnérabilité ontologique, c'est-à-dire à ses dimensions incarnées et inhérentes (Gilson, 2014; Soulet, 2005; Butler, 2012). Le caractère incarné de la vulnérabilité signifie qu'elle se vit d'abord et avant tout de manière physique. On pense ici aux conditions évidentes de souffrance physique telles que la faim ou les agressions physiques. Il inclut aussi la souffrance psychique et morale, qui affectent à la fois l'être physique et l'être social. Cette conception est celle qui s'apparente le plus à la définition de sens commun évoquée précédemment. Le caractère inhérent de la vulnérabilité réfère quant à lui à l'idée qu'elle fait partie intégrante de notre expérience humaine. Elle est inévitable et nous touchera tous à un moment ou à un autre de notre existence en raison de notre âge, de la maladie ou de diverses forces systémiques inégales telles que la mondialisation, le chômage ou la discrimination (Oliviero, 2016).

Cette conception de la vulnérabilité ouvre sur l'« impératif éthique et politique » de reconnaître notre commune vulnérabilité avec les personnes réfugiées proposé par le philosophe Guillaume Le Blanc (2011) :

> […] en nous reconnaissant chacun à notre manière comme vulnérables, comme exposés à toutes les formes de violence, physique, sociale et psychique, nous faisons un pas vers une compréhension de l'exclusion comme une chose commune plutôt que comme la seule affaire des exclus
>
> *p.13*

Pour l'auteur, cela revient à soutenir que les « vies vulnérables » forment un monde commun avec les vies qui s'estiment « non vulnérables ». Même si elle met de l'avant sa nature inévitable et fondamentalement partagée, la conception ontologique de la vulnérabilité peut paradoxalement induire l'idée qu'il s'agit d'un état qui doit être évité ou du moins minimisé et ce, en mettant de l'avant des réponses qui reposent sur la protection et l'assistance (Gilson, 2014; Soulet, 2005). Lorsqu'elle est la seule à être mobilisée, elle risque fortement d'enfermer les personnes dites vulnérables dans des représentations qui éludent leur agentivité et leur pouvoir sur leur propre existence (D'Cruze et Rao, 2004; Butler, Gambetti, et Sabsay, 2014). À l'opposé, soutenir l'idée d'une commune vulnérabilité peut entraîner une forme d'universalisme qui nie la spécificité des expériences de certaines personnes et de certains groupes (comme les femmes réfugiées), et par conséquent, la nécessité de mettre en place des mesures de soutien adaptées à leurs réalités propres.

La deuxième conception de la vulnérabilité considérée pour cette réflexion est relationnelle et situationnelle. Elle induit la nécessité de déplacer le regard généralement porté sur les personnes vers les situations, les processus ou les contextes au sein desquelles « leur » vulnérabilité se déploie (Butler et al., 2016). Ainsi, les situations de vulnérabilité que vivent les personnes

relèvent de circonstances qui les dépassent, en raison de l'interdépendance qui les lie aux autres individus, mais aussi aux caractéristiques de l'environnement physique et social qui les entoure. Elle porte aussi une attention particulière aux dynamiques qui exposent les personnes dites vulnérables à des relations abusives, à de l'oppression et des injustices (Atak, Nakache, Guild, et Crépeau, 2018).

Le dernier apport conceptuel mobilisé est issu des travaux de chercheuses féministes transnationales (Mc Laren, 2017; Mohanty, 2003; Zeweri, 2017), qui placent au centre de leur approche la déconstruction des oppositions binaires et la remise en question des rapports de pouvoir entre les individus, les groupes et les États-nations. C'est au sein de ce courant que se situe la notion de vulnérabilité ambivalente proposée par Oliviero (2016) au cœur de cet article. Celle-ci vise à montrer que les individus et les groupes peuvent certes faire face à des oppressions, des discriminations et des restrictions arbitraires, mais qu'ils peuvent également bénéficier de fenêtres d'opportunités spécifiques dans le temps et dans l'espace. Appliquée à la situation de refuge, cette façon de conceptualiser la vulnérabilité reconnaît que la migration forcée entraîne maintes formes de violences et de marginalisation, mais qu'elle peut également être source d'opportunité et de continuité dans la vie des personnes (Grace, 2019; Oliviero, 2016; Zeweri, 2017).

Ces divers apports théoriques montrent que la vulnérabilité présente un réel potentiel analytique, pourvu que l'on accepte de ne pas limiter son usage à la description de la

> […] démunition matérielle ou […] de ne pas enfermer l'analyse dans un statut particulier de fragilité avérée ou dans une essentialisation de l'exposition au risque, donc de ne pas en faire une des propriétés essentielles de l'individu ou du groupe en question et de ne pas en faire un état intermédiaire entre intégration et exclusion
>
> *(Soulet, 2005, p. 25).*

La section suivante expose la stratégie méthodologique déployée pour s'efforcer d'y parvenir.

Cadre méthodologique

La recherche présentée dans cet article s'appuie sur une approche qualitative de type exploratoire visant à amplifier la voix des personnes concernées afin de mobiliser le potentiel analytique de la notion de vulnérabilité (Oliviero, 2016; Soulet, 2005; Taha, 2020). Elle peut être qualifiée d'inductive dans la mesure où elle accorde une place centrale à l'analyse des matériaux empiriques dans la recherche du sens des expériences vécues par les « sujets acteurs » (Desmarais, 2009).

Les récits de vie au cœur de cette recherche ont été recueillis à travers une démarche de terrain transnationale menée sur deux sites ayant joué un rôle important dans l'accueil des personnes réfugiées syriennes fuyant la récente guerre civile, à savoir le Canada/Québec (dans la région de Montréal) et le Liban (dans plusieurs localités à l'échelle du pays). Ainsi, le Canada a été l'un des principaux pays de réinstallation à répondre à l'appel lancé à la communauté internationale au plus fort de l'augmentation des déplacements en Méditerranée en 2015 avec l'Opération 25 000 Syriens lancée à l'automne 2015.[10] En tant que pays limitrophe à la Syrie, le Liban a quant à lui accueilli plus d'un million de personnes réfugiées (Gouvernement du Liban et Nations Unies, 2019) - autant que l'Union Européenne en entier et ce, même si sa superficie est 440 fois plus petite et qu'il est 120 fois moins peuplé. En cohérence avec le cadre théorique féministe transnational

[10] Près de 60 000 Syriens ont pu s'établir au Canada dont 13 000 au Québec depuis décembre 2015 (Blain et al., 2019).

(Mohanty, 2003; Mc Laren, 2017; Zeweri, 2017), la logique d'analyse des récits recueillis sur les deux terrains ne repose pas sur une comparaison entre les sites.[11] Elle propose plutôt une mise en relation des expériences des femmes rencontrées au sein de ces deux espaces nationaux en s'intéressant d'abord et avant tout à ce qu'elles ont en commun – le fait d'avoir dû fuir la Syrie suite au récent conflit armé et de détenir la responsabilité principale du soutien de leur famille. Ces expériences sont ensuite contextualisées en fonction des conditions caractérisant leurs parcours au sein des différents sites. Je propose ici une remise en question du nationalisme méthodologique, c'est-à-dire de l'État-nation considéré comme échelle d'analyse « naturelle » des phénomènes sociaux en sciences sociales et comme institution qui respecte nécessairement les intérêts des femmes (Wimmer et Schiller, 2008; Oliver, 2017)

Dans le cadre du mémoire sur lequel se base cet article, 12 femmes en provenance de Syrie ont été rencontrées (cinq au Québec et sept au Liban). Des entretiens de type récit de vie s'appuyant sur des assises thématiques (Bertaux, 2010) et chronologiques (Ghorashi, 2008; Eastmond, 2007) ont été réalisés. Tel qu'évoqué précédemment, cet article s'appuie toutefois plus spécifiquement sur l'analyse de 8 des 12 récits puisqu'ils abordaient explicitement les impacts de la migration forcée sur les dynamiques familiales.[12] Les participantes ont d'abord été sollicitées avec l'aide d'intervenantes d'organisations locales (p.ex. organisations œuvrant spécifiquement auprès des femmes réfugiées ou en défense de droits des réfugiés) ainsi que des interprètes associées au projet. Ces dernières ont joué un rôle clé dans le recrutement sur les deux sites, et tout particulièrement au Liban, où le terrain a pris une couleur ethnographique : l'étudiante et la chercheure responsable du projet de recherche plus large dans lequel s'insérait la présente étude (Caron, 2017-2020)[13] vivaient chez l'interprète avec qui Caron collabore depuis une quinzaine d'années dans un camp de réfugiés en banlieue de Beyrouth (Richard et Caron, 2020; Caron, 2012). Au Québec, nous avons également travaillé avec des interprètes de confiance avec qui nous avions collaboré lors de projets précédents (Blain et al., 2019), qui ont notamment relayé les affiches de recrutement sur les médias sociaux afin de rejoindre des femmes ne fréquentant pas les organismes partenaires. La méthode boule-de-neige a été également utilisée en complément.

Les entrevues se voulaient les moins dirigées possible afin de laisser les femmes libres d'aborder les sujets qu'elles considéraient elles-mêmes importants.[14] La majorité des participantes a choisi de livrer leurs récits en arabe. En raison de ma maitrise insuffisante de cette langue, ces entrevues ont été réalisées avec l'aide de trois inter-

[11] L'approche transnationale permet aussi de voir la Syrie, le Liban et le Québec/Canada comme étant ultimement liés les uns aux autres, dans la mesure où plusieurs des réfugiés syriens réinstallés au Canada/Québec ont transité par le Liban (Blain et al., 2019) et que la présence syrienne et libanaise en sol canadien date de plus de 135 ans (Asal, 2016).

[12] Ce thème a été choisi en raison de la récurrence et de la diversité des éléments abordés à ce sujet par les femmes dans leurs récits et répertorié lors du codage des données effectué à l'aide du logiciel Atlas.

[13] Le projet de recherche principal mené par Caron (2017-2020) visait à mieux comprendre les réalités de femmes réfugiées en provenance de Syrie établies au Québec/Canada et au Liban à travers la complexité des processus et des pratiques qui leur permettent de (sur)vivre, de dépasser les obstacles rencontrés et de tisser de nouvelles appartenances identitaires dans leurs parcours de refuge.

[14] Sauf si la personne demandait à ce que des questions plus précises lui soient posées.

[15] Malgré les écueils potentiels liés à la présence d'une interprète, notamment sur le plan de l'accès aux nuances du discours direct de la personne, sa présence a été précieuse à plusieurs égards (p.ex. pour établir le lien de confiance avec les participantes ou m'expliquer certains codes culturels ou éléments de contexte historique ou social).

prètes différentes qui ont traduit tantôt vers l'anglais, tantôt vers le français.[15] Le reste des entrevues a été réalisé directement en anglais ou en français lorsque possible et souhaité par les femmes.

En accord avec le caractère exploratoire de la recherche qui ne peut prétendre à la généralisation des résultats, les participantes ont été choisies de manière à assurer une diversification des enjeux et contextes de vie représentés (p.ex. âge, temps passé en exil, statut matrimonial, statut migratoire, niveau d'éducation, appartenance religieuse, etc.). Le critère principal d'inclusion dans la recherche était de se considérer comme la principale responsable du soutien financier et des soins du quotidien de sa famille. Leurs configurations familiales étaient multiples: deux vivaient avec un conjoint, deux étaient séparées/divorcées, deux étaient veuves et deux étaient célibataires. La moitié avaient des enfants en bas âge tandis qu'une avait des enfants adultes et des petits-enfants vivant dans un autre pays et que le reste n'avait pas d'enfants.

Soutenir sa famille en contexte de migration forcée au Québec et au Liban

Les récits des femmes réfugiées en provenance de Syrie rencontrées au Québec et au Liban témoignent d'une importante complexité sur le plan des impacts de la migration forcée sur les femmes elles-mêmes et sur leurs relations avec leurs proches. Dans les lignes qui suivent, ils sont analysés à travers le prisme de la vulnérabilité ambivalente, à savoir les éléments d'adversité, des opportunités transformatrices ainsi que des continuité dans les parcours de vie des femmes (Grace, 2019; Oliviero, 2016; Zeweri, 2017).

DES SOURCES DE DIFFICULTÉS ET D'ADVERSITÉ

Les récits des femmes rencontrées ont fait état d'un nombre important de difficultés rencontrées à différentes étapes du déplacement forcé. Les deux femmes ayant migré avec leur conjoint ont souligné des changements dans leurs relations conjugales. Fawzia (Liban, 39 ans)[16] souligne par exemple: « Oui, c'est devenu pire. Spécialement avec mon mari. Parce que sa personnalité a changé, ma personnalité a changé. Nous avons beaucoup de disputes, beaucoup de pression » [traduction libre].[17] Sawsan (Liban, 32 ans) révèle quant à elle qu'après le déplacement au Liban et la perte du soutien de leur famille élargie, les tensions au sein de son couple ont fortement augmenté. Celles-ci ont mené à des épisodes de violence conjugale intense et au divorce. Depuis, elle est seule avec ses deux enfants et rencontre d'importantes difficultés qui lui font dire :

> J'ai pensé au suicide plusieurs fois, mais je ne l'ai pas fait à cause de mes enfants. Une femme sans soutien est morte socialement. Si un homme est avec elle, il va essayer de la soutenir. Il va chercher du travail. Mais être seule est très difficile [traduction libre].

Ses propos font écho aux constats du HCR (2008), qui reconnaît que les femmes en situation d'exil sans soutien masculin font face à des facteurs de risque accrus. Elles sont ainsi plus susceptibles de subir les conséquences de la discrimination et de la marginalisation, des relations inégales de genre et de pouvoir ainsi que de l'effondrement des structures d'appui familiales et communautaires.

La migration forcée a aussi un impact sur les relations d'au moins deux des femmes ayant migré avec leurs enfants en bas âge. Dilkani (Liban, 35 ans) évoque à ce sujet:

[16] Les pseudonymes des femmes rencontrées seront utilisés tout au long du texte, suivis du lieu de l'entrevue et de l'âge de la personne.

[17] Les extraits de récits partagés par les femmes elles-mêmes en anglais ou traduits vers cette langue par l'interprète ont été traduits en français pour les fins de cet article.

> Mes enfants souffrent. Ils ne contactent personne, ils n'ont pas le temps de jouer, ils n'ont pas d'endroit où jouer. […] Les enfants deviennent agressifs parce que leurs besoins ne sont pas comblés. […] Au Liban, ils ont changé, je dois crier, ils crient, alors on n'arrive pas à communiquer [traduction libre].

Dima (Québec, 33 ans) souligne quant à elle comment sa réinstallation extrêmement rapide au Canada, à peine quelques mois après la perte de son mari et la naissance de sa fille au même moment, ont eu un effet déstabilisant et ont affecté sa disponibilité face à sa fille suite à leur arrivée:[18]

> [...] Je criais sans arrêt après ma fille. Je ne pouvais pas jouer avec elle, je n'avais pas d'énergie. Et vous savez, parce que j'étais triste, je pensais toute la journée à : « Ok je suis venue ici pour Hiba, et Hiba ne va pas bien. Je ne peux pas passer de temps avec elle, Hiba, et je crie toujours après elle, je n'ai pas de temps. Je veux jouer avec elle, je veux qu'elle soit une très bonne personne, comme son père aimerait qu'elle le soit. Alors, je me suis dit: "Ok Dima, cette fois-ci, tu dois arrêter les cours de français et passer du temps avec Hiba [traduction libre].

Dima exprime une forte ambivalence alors qu'elle se retrouve dans un nouveau pays en étant seule avec son enfant :

> Tellement de choses à penser. Ancien pays et nouveau pays… Tu veux rester ici… Oh non, je veux y retourner … Je veux rester ici, c'est bon pour Hiba, la garderie est bien, l'école est bien… Mais je me dis « Qu'est-ce que je fais ici? Seulement être en sécurité?" Mais je veux vivre. Je veux montrer à ma famille la fête d'Hiba, tout ce qu'elle fait. […] Un nouveau pays et aucune famille. […] Hiba ne les connait pas, elle connait seulement moi et son père en photo. C'est tout [traduction libre].

Le récit de Sahar (Québec, 53 ans), qui est elle aussi seule à Montréal, montre quant à lui les multiples options considérées afin de fuir la Syrie et d'être réunie avec ses enfants adultes établis en dehors de la Syrie :

> Ma fille a essayé de me prendre chez elle en Arabie Saoudite mais c'est trop difficile pour les Syriens de voyager là-bas. Et mon fils aussi il m'a fait une demande (sic.) pour aller en Norvège. […] Puis les filles de mon frère étaient aux États-Unis depuis presque 20 ans. Elles m'ont encouragé à déposer une demande à l'ambassade américaine. Il y avait aussi un essai que j'ai fait pour venir ici au Canada, à Toronto. J'ai déposé une demande à travers le groupe de cinq, le groupe de parrainage à cinq, mais ça n'a pas marché.

Elle décidera finalement de venir demander l'asile seule au Canada en passant par les États-Unis. Au moment de notre entrevue, elle vivait dans l'incertitude face à l'issue de sa demande d'asile et ressentait un sentiment d'isolement, voire d'emprisonnement, renforcé par sa difficulté à apprendre la langue française et une situation d'abus de la part de sa propriétaire : « C'est comme si je suis en prison chez elle. C'est comme si le Canada est une grande prison et chez elle c'est une petite prison ». Les témoignages de Sawsan, de Dima et de Sahar rejoignent les constats de Nicholson (2018) et de Madziva (2016), qui montrent l'importance du soutien de la famille pour les personnes réfugiées et les effets délétères des limites du droit à la vie familiale et à l'unité familiale pour les personnes réfugiées.

La migration forcée a également des effets sur les relations de certaines femmes célibataires avec leurs parents, comme l'affirme Maya (Québec, 33 ans):

> C'est sûr que la vie devient plus dure, ça a changé aussi la mentalité. Parce que quand j'étais en Syrie dans ma tête il y avait toujours l'idée de "ok mes parents sont ici quand je me marie il y a mon mari". J'étais plus dépendante. Mais quand je suis arrivée, après un an je me suis rendue compte "ok je vais vivre ici, je vais continuer ma vie ici, ok, mais mes parents ne sont pas responsables. Même s'ils veulent. Maintenant je suis seule, je n'ai pas de partenaire. Ça veut dire que je suis 100% responsable". Quand j'ai découvert ça c'était difficile à comprendre.

[18] Dima a fait partie de l'Opération 25 000 Syriens. Son processus de parrainage s'est déroulé en moins de 3 mois.

Maya est par ailleurs la seule femme à parler explicitement de vulnérabilité pour décrire les difficultés d'adaptation qu'elle et ses parents vivent au quotidien:

> Et même temps, moi je ne suis pas habituée, en Syrie je suis habituée de savoir tout, de faire tout, et ici ça me donnait l'impression que je suis vulnérable. Et j'imagine que c'est dix fois plus pour mes parents, parce qu'ils sont vieux, moi je suis capable d'apprendre. Mais pour eux, ce n'est pas facile.

Maya aborde ici des enjeux intergénérationnels ayant eu des impacts différents sur la façon dont se déroule le processus d'adaptation de chacun des membres de la famille (Denov, Fennig, Rabiau, et Shevell, 2019). En plus de l'adversité, les récits des femmes rencontrées ont aussi fait ressortir des opportunités pour elles-mêmes et les membres de leur famille.

Des sources d'opportunités transformatrices

Un nombre plus restreint de femmes rencontrées ont mentionné que la migration forcée était source de changements dans leurs relations familiales et leurs perceptions d'elles-mêmes qui avaient des répercussions positives dans leur vie. C'était par exemple le cas de Maya (Québec, 33 ans) qui ne voulait pas quitter la Syrie:

> En fait moi je ne voulais pas du tout quitter. Mais il y avait la pression de la famille, surtout mes sœurs parce que la situation était de plus en plus… comment on dit…augmentée, plus risquée. Chaque fois [que] ma sœur entend[ait] quelque chose aux nouvelles, elle m'appell[ait], elle cri[ait] « tu es folle, tu dois quitter ».

Son arrivée au Canada s'est toutefois avérée source de rapprochements familiaux avec ses sœurs établies au Canada bien avant le début du conflit:

> […] c'était bien aussi parce que j'ai passé du temps avec ma nièce, elle avait un an et demi, ça a créé un lien avec elle, jusqu'à maintenant elle me mentionne (sic.). Il y a une relation spécifique. Et même avec mes sœurs, quand j'étais en Syrie je n'avais pas une très bonne relation avec mes sœurs, je ne suis pas une personne qui aime la communication en ligne. Donc j'avais perdu un peu cette relation et ça a pris du temps pour qu'on soit plus proches.

Devoir travailler pour subvenir à ses propres besoins et ceux de sa famille suite à la migration forcée a également été présenté comme une source d'opportunités pour certaines femmes rencontrées. C'est ainsi que certaines femmes qui travaillaient déjà avant la guerre sont amenées à changer de domaine d'emploi, notamment vers l'intervention sociale auprès de personnes réfugiées. Elles ont pour la plupart souligné à quel point ce type de travail avait des effets bénéfiques. Ainsi, Fawzia (Liban, 39 ans), ancienne enseignante au primaire, relate son implication au sein d'une organisation qu'elle a initialement fréquentée pour obtenir de l'aide pour elle-même et ses enfants :

> J'essayais de travailler avec les enfants pour sortir mes enfants de la situation à laquelle ils font face parce qu'ils ont été traumatisés après avoir été témoins d'une bombe. J'ai voulu travailler avec les enfants pour pouvoir sortir mes enfants et moi-même de ce que nous avons vécu [traduction libre].

En plus d'aider sa propre famille, Fawzia sent qu'elle peut désormais aider d'autres personnes réfugiées à faire face à leurs difficultés:

> J'ai suivi beaucoup de cours et j'ai commencé à donner des cours aux autres personnes pour les aider à se débarrasser de ce qu'il y a en dedans. Ça m'a aidé. Je n'ai pas oublié ce qui est arrivé, je n'ai pas oublié tous mes souvenirs, mais je suis plus forte maintenant alors si je vois quelqu'un souffrir, je peux le soutenir, je peux l'aider à se tenir debout à nouveau [traduction libre].

L'expérience de Fawzia fait ressortir ce que Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016) souligne à propos du caractère hybride des communautés

d'accueil locales dans lesquelles s'installent les personnes réfugiées. Selon l'autrice, les « réfugiés hôtes » contribuent à réduire la distinction entre personne déplacée et société d'accueil. Ainsi, trop souvent, leurs interactions sont vues de manière réductrice. D'un côté, on s'intéresse à la fréquentation et à l'accès des personnes réfugiées aux ressources du pays d'accueil. De l'autre côté, lorsque l'on reconnaît leur rôle en matière d'accueil, il est le plus souvent circonscrit au soutien apporté à leurs compatriotes à travers des structures diasporiques, éludant la richesse de leur insertion dans le tissu social des sociétés où elles sont établies.

L'histoire de Layal (Liban, 35 ans) permet d'aller encore plus loin en ce sens, en montrant clairement que l'implication des personnes réfugiées peut contribuer créer des ponts entre les différentes communautés, en plus d'avoir un impact positif sur leur propre santé mentale: « Mentalement, j'étais bien, je me sentais bien. Je sentais que ce travail enlevait ma douleur et mon stress » [traduction libre]. Elle travaillait au sein d'une organisation gouvernementale qui œuvrait à déconstruire les préjugés entre les communautés libanaise, palestinienne et syrienne, une réalité à laquelle elle a été durement confrontée depuis son arrivée au Liban en tant que femme syrienne d'origine palestinienne:

> La femme syrienne est ciblée au Liban. Elle est ciblée pour des questions sexuelles. Une fois que l'homme découvre que cette femme est syrienne, il essaie de passer chez elle, il essaie de profiter de choses sexuelles, alors… Ils demandent de manière impolie. Je suis devenue tellement plus forte! Je suis forte maintenant, alors je peux faire face aux gens [traduction libre].

Cette nouvelle façon de faire face à l'adversité a toutefois des impacts sur la relation avec ses proches demeurés en Syrie: « À cause des changements dans ma personnalité, j'ai des problèmes avec mes parents. Ils n'aiment pas ma personnalité. Parce qu'en Syrie on n'a pas à faire face à ces problèmes et à cette discrimination » [traduction libre]. Le développement de cette force se fait donc au prix d'importantes souffrances, et même de conflits familiaux. Le témoignage de Layal témoigne d'une prise de recul nécessaire face à la célébration sans équivoque des changements de rôle au sein de la famille et de l'empowerment des femmes réfugiées, à l'instar des travaux de Rohwerder (2016) qui appellent également à la prudence puisque leurs impacts à long terme demeurent encore incertains et peu documentés.

Des éléments de continuité dans les trajectoires de vie

Quelques femmes ont finalement identifié des expériences qui s'inscrivent dans une continuité qui prend diverses formes dans leur présent en exil, et qui permettent de nuancer les représentations monolithiques de la migration forcée comme quelque chose qui transforme « forcément » toutes les sphères de la vie des personnes réfugiées. Elvira (Liban, 29 ans) raconte en effet comment peu de choses ont changé depuis qu'elle vit au Liban avec sa mère et ses soeurs:

> Rien n'a changé en fait dans la structure de notre petite famille. En Syrie nous vivions dans une maison toutes ensembles sans nous impliquer dans la société. Et ici au Liban, on vit de la même manière, toute notre famille vit seule sans s'impliquer dans notre quartier ou la société [traduction libre].

Le récit de Sahar (Québec, 53 ans) met toutefois en évidence des souffrances personnelles antérieures qui trouvent un prolongement dans la vie en exil:

> J'ai passé par différentes expériences. J'étais déprimée et ce sentiment de pression c'était lié à l'abus répétitif des gens […] Donc c'est la même souffrance, il n'y a pas un apaisement, il n'y a pas une stabilité. […] Je ne sais pas, je suis encore dans la même situation. […] Je n'étais jamais contente dans ma vie,

> même pendant mon enfance. Je n'ai pas vraiment vu mon enfance. Je me suis mariée à l'âge de 14 ans, je n'ai pas vu ma puberté, une vie de mariage heureuse, une vie conjugale heureuse. Donc tout était difficile et je suis arrivée ici et je ne sais pas ce sera quoi (sic.) mon avenir.

Avant le début du conflit en Syrie, Sahar était divorcée, elle vivait seule et elle était propriétaire de sa propre boutique. Elle sentait qu'elle avait toujours réussi à y faire face : « Malgré que je sois une personne responsable, je suis une personne [combattante], donc toute ma vie j'ai vraiment pris beaucoup de responsabilités. Je suis une femme qui n'est pas habituelle. Tout le monde dit que je suis responsable, je travaillais ». Les continuités sont un élément moins souvent abordé dans la littérature sur les migrations, qui a tendance à parler en termes de pertes et de gains liés à la migration. Or, une approche transnationale nous incite à porter attention aux continuités entre les espaces où se déroule la migration, qui s'avèrent tout aussi importantes pour comprendre les expériences des personnes en exil (Le Gall, 2001).

Bien que la notion de vulnérabilité ambivalente (Oliviero, 2016) se soit avérée un outil d'analyse précieux ayant permis d'en élargir ses contours, on ne peut s'empêcher de relever l'absence quasi totale de la vulnérabilité dans les propos des femmes. Les femmes ont plutôt évoqué la notion de responsabilité, qui s'incarne elle aussi de façon ambivalente.

Éléments de conclusion : entre vulnérabilités et responsabilités ambivalentes

Depuis la fin du 20e siècle, le « langage de la vulnérabilité » est devenu de plus en plus répandu dans les débats sur la migration (Atak et al., 2018). Il importe de spécifier que la volonté à la base de la présente réflexion – celle de reconsidérer cet usage ubiquitaire de la part des instances internationales – n'était en aucun cas le fruit d'un scepticisme face à la véracité des situations de vulnérabilité que vivent les femmes réfugiées. Elle résidait plutôt dans une volonté de fournir aux femmes un espace où elles seraient vues et entendues en tant qu'expertes de leur propre vécu afin d'en arriver à une compréhension plus profonde et nuancée de leurs réalités, et du sens que leurs expériences peuvent (re)donner à la notion de vulnérabilité en contexte de migration forcée. Le cadre théorique féministe transnational (Mc Laren, 2017; Mohanty, 2003; Zeweri, 2017), et plus particulièrement le concept de vulnérabilité ambivalente proposé par Oliviero (2016), se sont avérés des outils précieux de remise en question des représentations monolithiques qui enferment les femmes dans des postures de victimes ou de combattantes (Caron et al., 2017).

Les récits des femmes ainsi analysés ont plutôt mis de l'avant des réactions complexes témoignant de la volonté d'assumer la responsabilité du soutien de leur famille ou de subvenir à leurs propres besoins et ceux de leur famille, sans pour autant évacuer les grandes souffrances et les formes d'ambivalence que cela leur faisait ressentir. Les femmes déploient « leurs puissances de vie » (Le Blanc, 2011, p. 68) afin d'assurer leur survie et leur protection sociale ainsi que celles de leurs proches (Fally, Caron, Carlton, et Blain, 2020; Taha, 2020). En ce sens, elles ont démontré qu'en dépit de leur lutte face à des formes d'adversité à la fois nouvelles et anciennes, leurs parcours sont empreints d'une indéniable force de vivre,

[19] J'emprunte ici cette formulation à la notion de conatus développée par Spinoza, qui réfère à l'effort que les êtres vivants déploient pour conserver, voire même augmenter leur « puissance d'être ».

qui témoigne d'une volonté de « persister dans leur être ».[19]

Au terme de cette analyse, il apparaît que la reconnaissance de la vulnérabilité comme condition ambivalente (Taha, 2020; Oliviero, 2016) gagnerait à être mise au cœur des représentations scientifiques, médiatiques et politiques des femmes réfugiées et de leurs proches. Elle pourrait ainsi inspirer les chercheurs et chercheuses à poursuivre le développemasalent de projets pouvant servir d'espaces de rencontres dynamiques et inclusifs afin d'élargir les frontières du monde commun et partagé avec les personnes réfugiées (Richard et Caron, 2020). Sans nier que la migration forcée expose les personnes réfugiées à des expériences de vulnérabilité envers lesquelles les sociétés qui les accueillent ont la responsabilité d'agir, il appert finalement qu'une conception ambivalente de la vulnérabilité pourrait inspirer les intervenants sociaux et intervenantes sociales à tenter d'éviter les visions victimisantes des femmes réfugiées en vertu desquelles elles risquent de devoir « performer leur vulnérabilité » afin de répondre aux critères des institutions pour obtenir la protection et des services de soutien (Westoby et Ingamells, 2010; Garnier, Jubilut, et Sandvik, 2018).

À PROPOS DE L'AUTEURE

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Training and Integrating Public Service Interpreters in a Refugee Health Clinic: A Mixed-Method Approach to Evaluate an Innovative Program

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ABSTRACT

Language barriers can harm refugees' health, and trained interpreters are a solution to overcome these barriers in all health consultations. This study trained interpreters and integrated them in a refugee clinic. Nepali-speaking migrants were recruited and underwent 50 hours of training to serve as interpreters for recently arrived Bhutanese refugees in Quebec City. To evaluate the project, mixed data were collected. At baseline and follow-up, patients' health (as perceived by practitioners) and satisfaction were evaluated. Interpreters and practitioners were also interviewed and took part in joint discussion workshops. Patients' health remained stable but, interestingly, patients were slightly less satisfied at follow-up. Practitioners and interpreters described both benefits and difficulties of the program. For example, integrating interpreters within the clinical team allowed for better collaboration and mutual knowledge of cultures. Challenges included work overload, conflicts between interpreters and practitioners, and role conflicts for interpreters. Overall, the full-time integration of trained interpreters in the clinic facilitated communication and case administration. This practice could be especially beneficial for refugee clients. In future interventions, interpreter roles should be better clarified to patients and practitioners, and particular attention should be paid to selection criteria for interpreters.

KEYWORDS

language barriers; refugee health; community interpreters; mixed-methods; action-research

RESUMÉ

Les barrières linguistiques peuvent avoir un impact négatif sur la santé des réfugiés et le recours à des interprètes qualifiés est un moyen de surmonter ces barrières lors de toute forme de consultation médicale. Dans le cadre de cette étude, des interprètes ont été formés et intégrés à une clinique pour réfugiés. Des migrants de langue népalaise ont été recrutés et ont suivi cinquante heures de formation afin d'agir comme interprètes auprès de réfugiés bhoutanais récemment arrivés dans la ville de Québec. À des fins d'évaluation du projet, des données mixtes ont été recueillies. Lors de l'étude initiale et de l'étude de suivi, la santé des patient.es (telle que perçue

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par les praticien.nes) et leur satisfaction ont été évaluées. Les interprètes et les praticien.nes ont aussi pris part à des entretiens et des ateliers de discussion. La santé des patient.es est demeurée stable, mais, curieusement, les patient.es étaient légèrement moins satisfait.es lors de l'étude de suivi. Les praticien.nes et les interprètes ont décrit tant les bénéfices que les difficultés liés au programme. Par exemple, l'intégration des interprètes au sein de l'équipe clinique a permis une meilleure collaboration et une plus grande connaissance mutuelle des cultures. Les difficultés rencontrées incluent une surcharge de travail, des conflits entre les interprètes et les praticien.nes ainsi que des conflits de rôle pour les interprètes. De façon générale, l'intégration à temps plein d'interprètes qualifiés au sein de la clinique a facilité la communication et la gestion des cas. Cette pratique pourrait être particulièrement bénéfique pour une clientèle de réfugié.es. Dans les interventions futures, le rôle des interprètes devrait être mieux défini auprès des patient.es et des praticien.nes et une attention particulière devrait être portée aux critères de sélection des interprètes.

INTRODUCTION

Migrants' health in Canada tends to be better than that of the general Canadian population upon their arrival to the country (Gushulak et al., 2011). However, over time migrant health declines and eventually reaches a level similar to that of the Canadian population; this is known as the "healthy immigrant effect" (Newbold, 2005). This decline can be explained by many psychosocial factors, such as a poor understanding of the health-care system, institutional discrimination, and acculturation stress (Gkiouleka & Huijts, 2020; Khanlou, 2010). Refugees are a particularly vulnerable subgroup of migrants, and their health tends to decline faster than that of any other migrant group (Reed & Barbosa, 2017; Newbold, 2009).

Language barriers have also been identified as an important factor that could help to explain this health decline, as they engender many consequences for access to health care, understanding of care received, and treatment adherence or quality of care (Jacobs et al., 2006). Indeed, the lower the language proficiency in one of the host country's official languages, the faster health declines (Pottie et al., 2008).

In order to alleviate the negative consequences ensuing from language barriers, benefits of collaborating with a trained interpreter have been clearly underlined in medical and psychosocial contexts of care (Brisset et al., 2013; Gartley & Due, 2017; Karliner et al., 2007; Miller et al., 2005). Although trained interpreters are the gold standard in health care, the lack of interpretation services or the use of ad hoc interpreters (i.e., untrained interpreters) continues to be the norm (MacFarlane et al., 2009; Newbold et al., 2013; Yelland et al., 2016). Because they lack training, ad hoc interpreters are more at risk of jeopardizing consultations because of errors in translation, poor knowledge of medical terms, and role reversal issues in families (MacFarlane et al., 2009).

Barriers such as unawareness of interpreting resources, concerns about costs of services, complicated administrative procedures, and lack of training on working with interpreters hinder the use of trained interpreters (Brisset et al., 2014; MacFarlane et al., 2009). Barriers to access aside, training for community interpreters remains scarce and optional in Canada (Leanza et al., 2017). Therefore, actual access to trained interpreters is limited.

In the province of Quebec (where the present study took place), the Ministry of

Health supports regional interpreter banks, which are established and managed by community organizations (except for the Montreal and City of Quebec areas, where the banks are part of the public health-care network). Interpreters enrolled in these banks are supposed to have some training, but in reality, it is limited or non-existent. This situation is not particular to the province of Quebec. It is observed in other Canadian provinces and other countries (Vanderwielen et al., 2014; Leanza et al., 2017).

Moreover, not only is this training scarce and unstandardized; community interpreters are also rarely integrated into the clinical team. This lack of integration has documented consequences, such as impeding continuity of care and compromising the administration and management of a patient's case (Cheng et al., 2015). Continuity of care is perceived as increasingly important when treating certain types of patients, such as refugees, where developing a trusting relationship is especially crucial (Karliner & Mutha, 2010). Indeed, working with the same interpreter throughout patient follow-up is a frequent recommendation, and it has been urged that interpreters be integrated in interprofessional teams in order to enhance quality of care (Attard et al., 2015; Dubus, 2016).

STUDY CONTEXT

The present study is a collaborative action-research initiative between researchers from the Psychology and Cultures Lab at Université Laval, health practitioners from the Clinique de santé des réfugiés (Quebec Refugee Health Clinic), and community organizers from the Centre multi-ethnique de Québec (Quebec Multi-ethnic Centre). The Quebec Multi-ethnic Centre is an independent community organization, established in 1960, whose mission is to welcome migrants of any status to facilitate their establishment, to support their adaptation and integration into Quebec society, and to promote their access to better socio-economic conditions. The clinic, established in 2007, stems from the Ministry of Health's program initiative on the accessibility of services to ethnocultural communities. Psychosocial and medical evaluations and care are offered to all refugees and refugee claimants newly arrived in the city.

At the time of the study, in the city of Quebec, interpreters were available to public institutions (e.g., health clinics, courts of law, etc.) through a community organization called the Interpreters Bank. However, health practitioners at the clinic reported serious and hindering difficulties with the Interpreters Bank in managing refugee patients' follow-up, such as the inability to have the same interpreter every time and inadequate or lack of training. Therefore, in collaboration with these health practitioners and community organizers, an action-research project (Catroux, 2002) was established to address their needs and facilitate refugee patients' follow-up at the clinic. This project focused on the Bhutanese community, since at the time of the study, Bhutanese refugees comprised the largest group of refugees who were expected to arrive in the province.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were twofold (see **Figure 1**). The first aim (action component) was to train interpreters and integrate them in the clinic on a full-time basis over a one-year period. A 50-hour training program for community interpreters and two training workshops for practitioners were developed by the research team (including researchers,

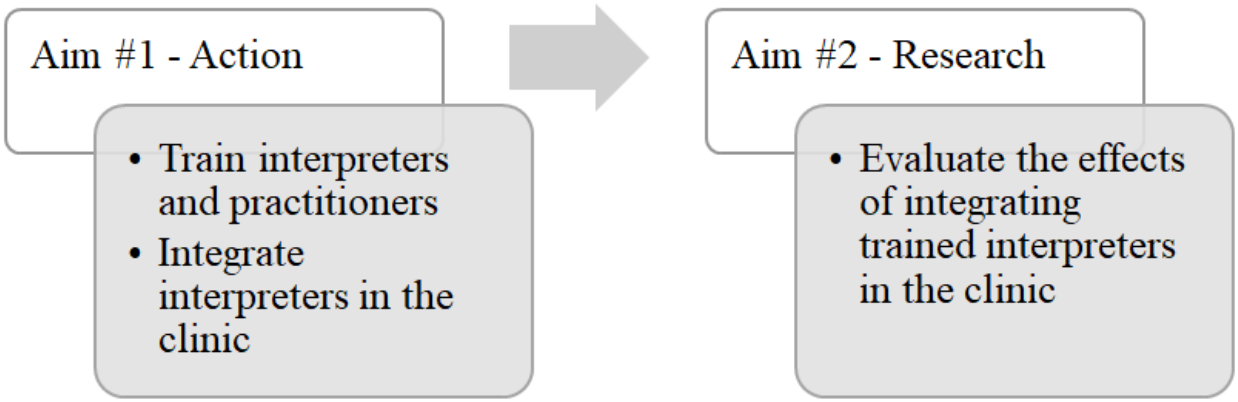

Figure 1
The Two Aims of the Action-Research Project

health professionals from the clinic, and community organizers). To the best of our knowledge, no such training initiative had previously been undertaken in Quebec, or in other Canadian provinces. Interpreters' integration into the clinical team (e.g., work schedule, finding a workspace for the interpreters in the clinic, joint workshops, etc.) was organized by the Quebec Multi-ethnic Centre and the clinic.

The second aim (research component) was to evaluate the effects of integrating trained interpreters in the clinic. Based on the literature, our assumption was that introducing trained interpreters into the clinic would enhance the quality of health care and of the relationship between practitioners and interpreters. The specific research aims were (1) to explore practitioners' and interpreters' points of view about their collaboration and the project, (2) to observe and measure the evolution of the relationship dynamic between practitioners and interpreters, (3) to assess patients' health status evolution during the project, and (4) to measure patients' satisfaction at the beginning and the end of the program. To address these aims, a mixed-method convergent parallel design was used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This type of design "occurs when the researcher collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research process and then merges the two sets of results into an overall interpretation" (p. 77). Mixed methods gather a variety of data (quantitative and qualitative) and mix these data to capture the complex and multifaceted impacts of the interpreters' integration into the clinic. Reporting on a mixed-method study was complex, so we followed Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) guidelines for mixed-methods research articles.

METHODS

TRAINING PROGRAM

Interpreters underwent 50 hours of training. The initial training, provided before integrating interpreters into the clinic, covered four major themes: interpreting techniques, ter-

minology used in health care, knowledge of the Quebec health-care system, and issues ensuing from a three-way relationship (communicational, relational, and ethical issues, and interpreters' roles). Training sessions were provided by members of the research team with experience in academic teaching in health sciences, an experienced university-trained interpreter, and a specialist of the Bhutanese community. Continuing training, during the integration of interpreters into the clinic, included six joint workshops with the practitioners and interpreters, held approximately every six weeks, with the third author acting as facilitator. Themes such as interpreters' roles, home visits, and nutrition were discussed on the basis of real cases, in order to provide the opportunity for practitioners and interpreters to learn together. Interpreters were also offered group supervision sessions (six one-hour sessions) with a psychologist trained in intercultural interventions. Interpreters were invited to discuss their experiences during these sessions to further their skill development. The research team also arranged two interventions (45-minute lunch-time meetings) with the practitioners (before and during the integration of interpreters into the clinic), to provide an overview of the research in the field of interpreting and basic instructions on how to work with interpreters.

Participants

Refugee patients from Bhutan were selected for the current study, since Bhutanese refugees comprised the largest group of refugees who were expected to arrive in Quebec during the project. A total of 151 (T1) and 143 (T2) refugee patients took part in the study. Patients' mean age was 34 (range 14–90, SD = 10.39), and 55% of participants were female. Ethics approval was obtained from research ethics committees from regional Health and Social Services Centres (Centres de santé et de services sociaux de la Vieille-Capitale, de Québec-Nord, de Portneuf), from the regional Public Health Office (Direction de Santé Publique de la Capitale-Nationale) and from the Jeffery Hale–St. Brigid's health institution.

The Quebec Multi-ethnic Centre recruited seven Nepali-speaking migrants as interpreters on the basis of several criteria: interpreter's maturity (e.g., sense of responsibility, previous professional experiences), previous experience in care (e.g., with children, adults, older adults), and the absence of apparent conflicts (e.g., reputation in the community). Mean age was 29 (range 21–44, SD = 8.10) and two were female. Only one had previous experience in community interpreting. In the first few weeks of the project, four interpreters dropped out of the program as the result of difficulties reconciling work schedules, mandatory French-language courses, and poor French-language proficiency. One interpreter was also evicted from the program halfway through the project in response to inappropriate behaviour at the clinic.

Nine health practitioners (the entire staff of the clinic) took part in the study (4 physicians, 2 nurses, 2 social workers, and 1 nutritionist), as well as the administrative agent of the clinic. Mean age was 39 (range 25–54, SD = 10.06) and 8 were female.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Different procedures (see **Figure 2** for a summary) and analyses were used for the research part of the project. They are presented by specific research aim.

Practitioners and Interpreters' Perspectives

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted in two phases: at the beginning of

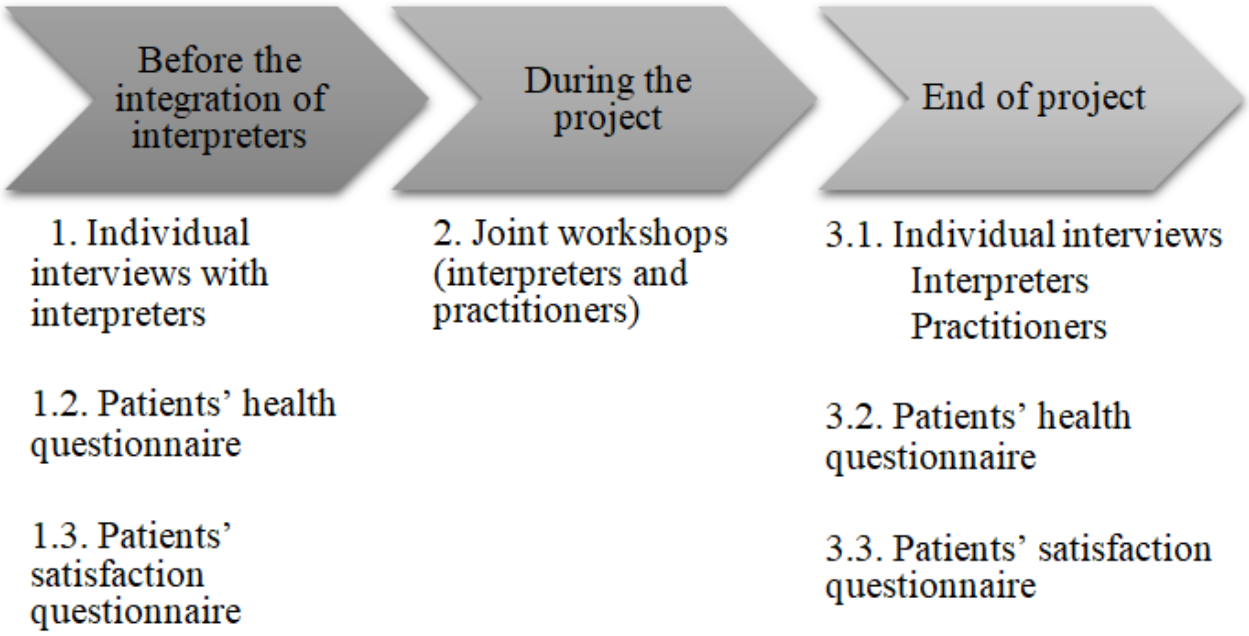

Figure 2
Summary of Procedures and Timing of Data Gathering

the project with the initially recruited interpreters (n = 7), and at the end, with the remaining interpreters (n = 2), health practitioners (n = 9), and administrative agent (n = 1). An intermediate interview was also held with the interpreter who was evicted from the program, after the eviction. Pre-identified themes were explored during the interviews relating to participants' general experiences with the program, representations of interpreter and practitioner roles, benefits and difficulties of the program, the interpreter–practitioner–patient relationship, as well as communicational and cultural challenges.

An inductive thematic analysis (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2008) was conducted in order to identify emerging themes in participants' experiences with the program. To better understand the essence of interpreters' and practitioners' experiences, transcripts were analyzed separately for each group of actors, and different themes emerged in their experiences. In an inter-rater and iterative process, the first two authors and a research assistant coded the same interviews independently and met throughout the analyses to compare coding and resolve disagreements. Excerpts of interviews were translated from French to English.

Evolution of the Relationship between Practitioners and Interpreters

In addition to interviewing practitioners and interpreters, observational data during joint workshops between practitioners and interpreters were also collected to better understand how their relationships were built and evolved. All six workshops were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. A conversation analysis was conducted to explore if, and how, interpreters were integrated in

these discussions. Conversation analysis is based on "the atomization of actions, that is, their breakdown into small units and then their re-composition" (Vincent, 2001, p. 180, free translation) to obtain an overall picture of the integration of interpreters (Vincent, 2001). We consider the conversations that took place in the workshops to be social interactions "with risks and issues that can be decoded by conversational analysis" (p. 179). These risks and issues indicate the relationships between interpreters and practitioners that take place daily in the clinic. As recommended by ten Have (2007), common organizers of the conversations, such as sequences, turn takings, interruptions, and repairs (i.e., organized ways of dealing with interaction failures) were coded and described. These organizers allow to break down the conversation into smaller descriptive components. The presence of humour and negative statements (e.g., microaggressions) were also looked for as markers of the quality of relationships. Each workshop was analyzed independently; comparisons between workshops were then performed. As an objective measure of interpreters' inclusion in the conversation, workshop facilitator, interpreter, and practitioner speaking times were recorded, and individual regression analysis with SPSS 18 was conducted to determine the evolution (or not) of participants' speaking time.

Patients' Health Status (as Perceived by Practitioners)

In order to preserve patient anonymity, the research team could not access patients' files, and therefore practitioners' perceptions about patients' health were used as a proxy measure. Practitioners filled out a brief questionnaire at the end of each consultation, specifying whether they evaluated patients' health as stable, better, or worse than the previous consultation. Descriptive statistics and frequency analyses were run using this information.

Patients' Satisfaction

To evaluate patients' satisfaction, patients were asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the implementation of the program. A short version of the WHO scale for service satisfaction, as validated by St-Onge et al. (1997), was used. It relies on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1: completely dissatisfied to 5: very satisfied). Items were translated into Nepali by the most experienced interpreter of the program and a Nepalese academic. Basic socio-demographic information was also obtained (age and gender). Questionnaires were completed with the help of the program's interpreters. Quantitative analyses were conducted with SPSS 18, such as descriptive statistics and mean comparisons (with t-tests). Size effects (partial η^2) were also calculated in order to grasp scientific significance as recommended by Champely and Verdot (2007). According to Cohen (1988), a η^2 greater than or equal to .01 refers to a small size effect, a η^2 greater than or equal to .06 to a moderate size effect, and η^2 greater than or equal to .14 to a large size effect.

RESULTS

PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCES DURING THE PROGRAM

Practitioners raised benefits and difficulties ensuing from the project, and these were organized according to four themes relating to (1) the interpreter's full-time presence at the clinic, (2) continuity of care, (3) selection of interpreters, and (4) perceptions about the pertinence and efficacy of the project. Bene-

fits and difficulties are reported according to these four themes.

Benefits of the full-time integration of trained interpreters in the clinic included an increase in stability in their work due to a facilitated access to the same interpreters and an increase in ability to communicate with patients. Practitioners also appreciated having the opportunity to communicate with interpreters at all times, as this allowed them to access cultural information, debrief the interpreter before and after a consultation, and ensure a more efficient management of the clinic and better patient follow-up.

> There were situations where we had to brief the interpreter before. The fact that he's already here before the consultation, and that he knows how we work, that he knows us as practitioners, sometimes, it makes it easier.
>
> *(Practitioner 1)*

Moreover, continuity of the relationship and regular contact with interpreters was much appreciated, since it facilitated collaboration with interpreters (e.g., allowed for health practitioners and interpreters to understand each other's working habits) and was thought to have positive impacts on care.

> I think that working often with the same person, it helps a lot as well. Not only can that person get to know the way I work, but I also get to know the way she works.
>
> *(Practitioner 1)*

Practitioners also appreciated the better supervision of interpreters this program offered and the possibility to resolve issues more efficiently, and thus ameliorate collaboration. For instance, when an issue arose, there was an immediate follow-up with the interpreter, contrary to no follow-up when working with the Interpreter Bank. Practitioners also appreciated the discussion workshops, which allowed them to access interpreters' opinions on different issues. In addition, having at least one female and one male interpreter was perceived very positively, as it provided sensitivity to patient preferences for the gender of the interpreter (e.g., female patients preferring a female interpreter for a gynecology consultation). Finally, practitioners wished the program could be extended to other linguistic groups at the clinic, since the project showed them how collaboration with the program's interpreters was an improvement over their experience with the Interpreter Bank.

In spite of these benefits, the full-time presence of interpreters at the clinic also brought difficulties. For instance, confusion about interpreter roles emerged, as well as challenges in relationships with interpreters (i.e., the need to reframe the relationship with interpreters to preserve a strictly professional relationship). Moreover, implementation of the program with the full-time presence of an interpreter led to a work overload for health-care professionals. For instance, knowing that an interpreter was always present and able to help them, patients started showing up without appointments, and practitioners felt trapped by the situation, as ethically they could not refuse to treat their patients when required. This also resulted in cumbersome administrative procedures for practitioners (i.e., more paperwork). Finally, practitioners emphasized that it would be important, in the future, to select interpreters who do not belong to the same cultural community as patients, since there were problems related to caste systems.

Table 1.

Patients' Satisfaction Mean Scores and Size Effect for Each Satisfaction Item between T1 and T2

Item (scale from 1 to 5)	Mean (SD) T1	Mean (SD) T2	Sig.	Size effect
6. To which extent do you feel the health professional you met with listened to you attentively?	4.85 (.42)	4.50 (.77)	t(140) = 5.24***	.16
5. How would you evaluate the friendliness of the clinic staff?	4.58 (.67)	4.16 (.91)	t(139) = 4.58***	.13
9. How would you evaluate the way you were treated according to the principles of respect and dignity?	4.68 (.67)	4.28 (.93)	t(141) = 4.53***	.13
11. What do you think of the help that was provided to you by the clinic?	4.83 (.50)	4.39 (1.02)	t(140) = 4.47***	.13
12. In general, to which extent do you think the staff of the clinic has understood the type of help you needed?	4.53 (.82)	4.10 (1.03)	t(139) = 3.92***	.10
2. Are you satisfied with the services you have received today?	4.67 (.49)	4.46 (.71)	t(141) = 3.13**	.07
3. Did you find the clinic staff helpful?	4.60 (.58)	4.37 (.73)	t(141) = 2.85**	.05
10. To which extent do you think the health professional you met with was competent?	4.75 (.59)	4.58 (.68)	t(131) = 2.55*	.05
4. How would you evaluate the clinic staff's competence?	4.63 (.62)	4.44 (.72)	t(132) = 2.21*	.04
7. Are you satisfied with the measures that were taken to respect your intimacy during your consultation at the clinic (e.g., door closed, no outside interruptions during the consultation)?	4.63 (.56)	4.50 (.56)	t(135) = 2.04*	.03
8. During your stay at the clinic, did something or someone infringe on your individual rights?	1.79 (1.29)	1.92 (1.13)	t(125) = -1.30; ns	.01
1. Did you have difficulty obtaining information from the clinic staff when you asked for it?	2.96 (1.59)	2.77 (1.64)	t(56) = 0.00; ns	.00

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

Note. Items were translated from the French version of the questionnaire to English for the result section. Item numbers were retained from the questionnaire.

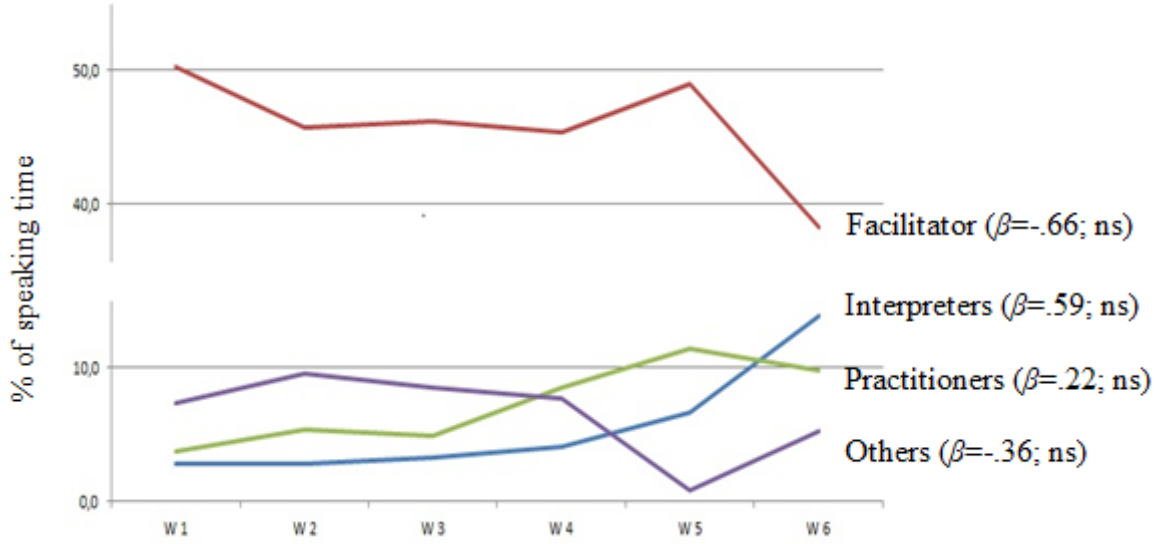

Figure 3

Percentage of Speaking Time during the Six Workshop Discussions According to Role and Individual Regression Coefficients

Note. The facilitator was always the same person. Others were the facilitator's assistant, the coordinator from the Quebec Multi-ethnic Centre (always present), and the principal investigator (present once, at the end of workshop 5).

Interpreters' Experiences during the Program

Although interpreters also discussed positive and negative experiences, their experiences were regrouped in four themes that were different from those describing practitioners' experiences: (1) representations of their role, (2) motivations to take part in the project, (3) relational issues, and (4) distress and lack of support.

When asked about the qualities of a good interpreter, most frequent answers consisted of being professional, respectful, and translating accurately. However, a few interpreters also described their role as cultural brokers who would provide cultural information to the health practitioner when judged necessary.

> We have to explain our culture to the doctor if the doctor doesn't understand what the client is saying.
>
> *(Interpreter 1)*

Motivations to take part in the program included the possibility of helping others in their community, facilitating communication for Bhutanese patients, ameliorating their language skills in French, and acquiring knowledge about health in general, and the health-care system in Quebec. At the end of the program, interpreters reported feeling happy and fulfilled for having had the opportunity to engage in this role.

Positive experiences of collaboration with health practitioners involved working with a calm and patient practitioner who was respectful and open to understanding the patient's culture. Interpreters also appreciated practitioners who were open to repeating, adapting their language (e.g., vulgarising when necessary), and using short sentences. Professionalism, respect, and the perception that practitioners viewed consultation as teamwork were highly valued and led to trusting relationships with practitioners.

Table 2
Patients' Satisfaction Mean Scores According to Gender at T1 and T2

Gender	Mean (SD) T1	Mean (SD) T2	Sig.	Size effect
Male (n = 68)	4.40 (.31)	4.15 (.45)	t(64) = 4.60***	.25
Female (n = 83)	4.30 (.37)	4.05 (.51)	t(76) = 3.92***	.17

Table 3
Patients' Satisfaction Mean Scores According to Age at T1 and T2

Age	Mean (SD) T1	Mean (SD) T2	Sig.	Size effect
14–19 (n = 32)	4.33 (.40)^{a}	3.87 (.48)^{a}	t(31) = 4.97***	.44
20–29 (n = 44)	4.33 (.29)^{a}	4.06 (.45)^{a,b}	t(38) = 3.71**	.27
30–39 (n = 22)	4.21 (.41)^{a}	4.11 (.54)^{a,b}	t(19) = .70; ns	.03
40–49 (n = 21)	4.37 (.35)^{a}	4.04 (.48)^{a,b}	t(19) = 2.70*	.28
50–59 (n = 16)	4.33 (.29)^{a}	4.33 (.42)^{b}	t(14) = .02; ns	.00
60 and over (n = 16)	4.55 (.21)^{a}	4.43 (.31)^{b}	t(15) = 1.86°	.20

$^{\circ}p < .10$; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$
Note. The means in columns with exponents (^{a,b}) represent significant differences at $p < .05$, using Tukey post hoc.

Negative collaborations occurred when interpreters felt practitioners were impatient and disrespectful towards them. Interpreters also faced challenges such as having difficulty translating accurately when the physician used long sentences (i.e., forgetting all there was to translate), or spoke too fast, or used certain French words, especially French Quebecker expressions, that were difficult to understand.

> Difficult collaboration … [occurs when] the client asks the doctor to repeat a few times, and if he asks because he didn't understand a word, at that time, the doctor would get mad. "Why didn't you understand? You must understand."
>
> *(Interpreter 2)*

Interpreters also experienced relational difficulties and challenges about their roles. For instance, patients seemed to believe that interpreters worked for them, so it was challenging to keep a professional distance with patients. Furthermore, patients tended to attribute a lot of power and prestige to the interpreter, and thus became exigent with interpreters. For instance, patients showed up with questions and needs (e.g., concerning not only health, but also administrative procedures for immigration, issues with bills, etc.) and expected interpreters to help out with these issues.

> The client isn't happy with me. "Why don't you want to listen to me? You work for me." The client doesn't understand the difference between the interpreter and the practitioner. We really have to explain what it means to be a practitioner and what it means to be an interpreter. We have to clearly say that my role is only to translate. "If you have questions, it's not for me, it's for the practitioner."
>
> *(Interpreter 3)*

On health issues more specifically, patients arrived at the clinic and expected the interpreter to arrange for them to be seen, even without an appointment. Consequently, health professionals blamed the interpreter for the work overload.

As for relational difficulties, interpreters felt that health practitioners did not always trust them and saw them as siding with the patient. Consequently, interpreters felt that they were blamed when something went wrong (e.g. when patients didn't show up on time or didn't take their medicine correctly). In these difficult times, interpreters felt alone and misunderstood, and wished there had been someone to turn to for advice.

Interpreters also experienced distress after difficult consultations and did not have appropriate support. They needed someone available to meet with quickly on site. Finally, interpreters recounted having to navigate instances of discrimination, such as being careful with the translation they offered patients in order to avoid transmitting the potentially discriminating sentences to the patient.

Evolution of Interpreter–Practitioner Relationship (during Workshops)

Group discussion analyses showed that while some aspects of conversation organizers evolved throughout the project, others remain unchanged. Humour began to appear in the discussions and interpreters were included, while there was no change in interruptions, the need for repairs, and negative statements.

The first workshops (workshops 2–4) were organized mainly around the facilitator's questions, addressed to all participants, but usually answered by practitioners, who then engaged in long interactions among themselves. Interpreters only spoke when they were questioned directly. They did ask questions, but only to confirm that what they did in consultations was appropriate or that they correctly understood a particular word or sentence. Only twice (in workshops 3 and 4) did an interpreter bring up an example (about the practice or an aspect of Bhutanese culture), which led to a larger group discussion that included interpreters. One interpreter was frequently interrupted when speaking, without possibilities of repairs, as shown in extract 1 (workshop 3). Interrupted turns are in bold:

> Facilitator: What is a good diet for a Nepalese? When a Nepalese says, "I eat well," what does it mean?
>
> Practitioner 1: He eats rice (laughter).
>
> Practitioner 2: He has enough to eat. Whatever he eats, he has enough to eat.
>
> Interpreter 1: **There is a lot of…**
>
> Facilitator: Lots of rice and bread?
>
> Interpreter 1: There are many different kinds of diets. Many types of foods for the Nepalese. The foods that we eat often are rice with meat and lentils. But occasionally for celebrations, we cook differently.
>
> Facilitator: Yes, like what, for example?
>
> Interpreter 1: **Like "momo "…**
>
> Practitioner 3: Oh yes, "momo" is really good.
>
> Interpreter 1: **Different kinds of…**
>
> Practitioner 3: It's like dough with meat inside, I think, eh?

The third workshop, on nutrition, also contained many negative statements about the Bhutanese, such as, "They only eat rice," "They don't know what vegetables are," "They cannot read," "They didn't receive any education on family economy," etc. Such statements were also found in other workshops (workshops 2 to 4).

The facilitator-driven Q-A pattern was still present in conversation organization in

the fifth workshop but had almost disappeared in the sixth. In these two workshops, practitioners also asked direct questions to interpreters, whose answers opened up other sequences of discussion, including interpreters. Humour and laughs were also more present and shared by all participants in the last workshops, as they did not target Bhutanese habits (such as eating rice).

While some aspects evolved during the group workshops, there were negative statements still made about the Bhutanese, and sometimes about Quebeckers, during the last workshops, as were interruptions, without repairs, of interpreters.

Figure 3 depicts the trend of interpreters gradually taking (or being given) more speaking time during group discussions. A similar trend was noticeable for practitioners, as their speaking time increased over time and remained stable during the last two workshops. In contrast, facilitator speaking decreased over time. However, individual regression coefficients for all roles were not significant.

Practitioner Perceptions of Patients' Health

On average, patients had 2.25 consultations during the program (*SD* = 1.59; range 1 to 9). Frequency analyses showed that practitioners perceived that health remained stable for a majority (77.4%) of patients during the program, while 16.9% showed a perceived amelioration and 5.6% experienced a perceived deterioration. No differences in practitioners' perceptions of patient's health evolution were found according to patient gender ($\chi^2(2) = 4.88$; ns) and age ($\chi^2(10) = 9.25$; ns).

Patient Satisfaction with Care

T-test analyses showed that overall patient satisfaction with care decreased significantly at the end of the program ($m_{T1} = 4.36$ (*SD* = .34); $m_{T2} = 4.10$ (*SD* = .49); t(141) = 5.90; $p < .001$). Mean comparison and size effect were computed for each item. **Table 1** presents these results organized according to size effect (from large to no effect).

There was no difference between men and women at T1 (t(148) = 1.67; ns) and T2 (t(141) = 1.12; ns), and both genders were significantly less satisfied in T2 (see **Table 2**), and size effect was large.

There were no differences in satisfaction according to age at T1 (F(144,5) = 1.36; ns). A difference appeared at T2 (F(137,5) = 4.08; $p < .01$), where the youngest patients (14–19 years of age) were less satisfied than the eldest (50 and over). While satisfaction mean scores for patients from 30 to 39 years, and from 50 and over showed no significant difference or a marginal one, from T1 to T2, size effect was small for the 30–39 and 50–59 ranges, and large for the 60 and over range. The other age ranges showed a significant decrease and a large size effect (see **Table 3**).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this collaborative action-research project was training and integrating interpreters in a refugee health clinic, and evaluating the effects of such training and integration. Results will be discussed in the order of the research-specific aims: (1) practitioners' and interpreters' perspectives, (2) evolution of the relationship dynamic, (3) patients' health, and (4) patients' satisfaction.

Many positive repercussions were raised by practitioners and interpreters. Both groups appreciated the possibility to have time to discuss before and after seeing patients. Indeed, a study conducted in the United States showed that it is difficult for interpreters to work with refugee patients (who may have a difficult past), and it was

recommended to take the time for a pre-briefing before the session (Dubus, 2016), which is exactly what the training program suggested. According to practitioners, it ensures quality in the follow-up and allows access to cultural information, which, in turn, has a positive impact on patients.

Interpreters appreciated when practitioners viewed consultations as teamwork and adapted their language to ease the interpretation. But at the same time, interpreters felt blamed for patients' inappropriate behaviours, like non-compliance with treatment, failure to appear, or work overload due to spontaneous patient visits. Interpreters reported being in a double bind: on the one hand, they could be mistrusted and reproached by practitioners, and on the other hand, patients could be very demanding (e.g., appearing at the clinic without appointments) and sometimes directly addressed the interpreters with wide-ranging questions (not always about health or health care). In such situations, whatever they chose to do, the result always disappointed one party. This challenge echoes findings in other studies, which showed that although interpreters play a key role in the development of a therapeutic alliance, challenges arise due to role conflict and practitioners' expectations (Brisset et al., 2013; Gartley & Due, 2017; Krupic et al., 2016).

The increase in interpreters' speaking time in joint workshops could be an indicator of the interpreters progressively taking their place in the clinical team. However, an important question remains: Even if they speak more frequently, are they heard more? The workshops' conversation organization showed a progressive change as interpreters began to ask questions and introduce new content in the last two workshops, thus transforming the passive facilitator-driven Q-A pattern into a more proactive one. Nonetheless, interpreters' turn interruptions were present in all workshops, and prejudice about Bhutanese, in the form of negative comments about their "strange" or "inappropriate" (cultural) habits, were also present all along. This finding suggests the need for awareness and cultural humility training for practitioners (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998), as they do not seem aware of their prejudice and microaggressions. This asymmetrical relationship between practitioners and interpreters, which tended to be perpetuated throughout the workshops, is the mark of a power imbalance that is difficult to transform. Research suggests that interpreters tend to remain with little capacity to act or to exert influence in the context of health care, despite having recognized professional training and competencies (Leanza et al., 2020).

This second set of results, along with ambivalent results from the interviews, mitigates the impression of a complete integration of interpreters in the team. But collaboration did improve over time, as practitioners expressed many positive effects and even asked for the expansion of such programs to include other languages. However, their trust in interpreters seemed to remain moderate. This is probably due to some characteristics of the selected interpreters. At the beginning of the program, most of them had low French proficiency and, despite having been trained, did not initially exhibit the "professional" competencies expected by practitioners. Yet this view changed over time, in part because as interpreters and practitioners interacted every day, their mutual understanding increased.

Integrating trained interpreters in the clinic seems to influence refugee patients' health, as perceived by their health practitioners. The practitioners' perception was that it remained stable or ameliorated, for

most patients. These findings may be interpreted as a gain, since previous studies tend to show that refugee health decreases over time (Khanlou, 2010). Although the study methodology does not explore the causality between the program and patient health outcomes, this finding is consistent with previous evidence, which suggests that adapted care, such as the presence of trained interpreters, could explain patients' stable health (Smith et al., 2011). Indeed, Smith et al. showed that offering care in the patient's preferred language and targeting a specific cultural group were among the main factors explaining the better outcome. It is therefore probable that the enhancement of clinical services by integrating trained interpreters for a specific cultural group of patients (along with all other positive ramifications of the program) partly explains this result. However, in the absence of previous data about the same clinic or other clinics with similar objectives, it is not possible to attribute this result uniquely to the program. Moreover, future studies should measure and consider the interval between visits, as this may also affect health changes.

Surprisingly, patients' overall satisfaction decreased significantly over time. This drop in satisfaction is independent of gender and age. While significant, it needs to be nuanced by examining specific questionnaire items. For services satisfaction, the difference over time, for the "satisfied" and "very satisfied" answers, is only 4.2% (99.3% vs. 95.1%), which implies that more than 95% of patients are still (very) satisfied. This is true for most items, as mean scores fall between 4 and 5. Items with major statistical significance and size effect over time are related to the relationship with the clinic practitioners (attentiveness, kindness, helpfulness) and the way participants were treated (respect, dignity). Interestingly, the item showing the lowest satisfaction is infringement of personal rights. This item showed no difference over time, which implies the feeling did not improve or worsen, but remained poor. This is also true for difficulty in getting information: this difficulty was frequent or very frequent at both measuring times.

An explanation for this decrease in satisfaction might be the increased knowledge about the health-care system and familiarity with it that refugees gain over time. For example, they became more aware of the services/information they could be provided but did not obtain. As a result, they may become more critical about the health-care system. The generation difference in satisfaction at T2, as indicated by the post hoc test, could also be interpreted from the same perspective: the youngest who learn French more quickly and who go to school may have even higher expectations due to their understanding of the system and language. A similar generational difference in health-care use by migrants and interpretation was reported in a German study (Glaesmer et al., 2011).

The satisfaction drop may also be related to spontaneous patients' visits, as patients had high expectations of interpreters (which interpreters could not meet). Although this increase in spontaneous visits was framed as a negative result by interpreters and practitioners, it may represent a positive outcome of this project. More precisely, previous research suggests that refugee patients may experience mistrust and/or misunderstanding of health-care services in the host country (Dubus & LeBoeuf, 2019), and failure to access care may partly explain the health decline in refugee populations. Our finding suggests that this program may have led to trust in the clinic and that refugee patients may not be as reluctant to access care.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

To our knowledge, this action-research project is the first of its kind, at least in Canada. Its strengths include the collaborative approach to determine research objectives, in order to address an important need of health practitioners working with refugee patients. As for limitations, fewer Bhutanese refugees than expected arrived in the City of Quebec, due to geopolitics. This eventuality influenced both the generalization of the quantitative results and the interpreters' integration into the clinic. Meeting with more refugees, especially at the start of the program, could have also resolved ambiguities in practitioners' expectations of interpreters' roles. Moreover, it was particularly challenging to find and recruit interpreters with the appropriate background and knowledge: most of them had limited French-language skills at the beginning of the project, low levels of education, and no previous training or experience in interpreting. In addition, only two interpreters remained at the end of the project, and this may limit our understanding of interpreters' experiences. However, considering these limitations and the unforeseen difficulties encountered during the program, the research findings concerning patients' health remaining stable might be considered stronger than if they would have been obtained in an ideal and controlled situation. Finally, patient satisfaction questionnaires were completed with the help of program interpreters, because there were no other resources, so this may have affected patients' responses. However, no questions about interpreters were included in the questionnaire, and interpreters were trained to be impartial while completing questionnaires with patients.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While hiring full-time interpreters is not necessary in all health-care institutions, it probably is in clinics receiving refugees, for this population is especially vulnerable to health decline after they arrive in a new country (Reed & Barbosa, 2017; Newbold, 2009). Having full-time interpreters on site can facilitate communication and case administration (Leanza et al., 2015). In order to enhance practitioner-interpreter collaboration, initial training for both is necessary, as well as continuous education (e.g., workshops and discussions of specific cases).

One main issue that needs clarification is interpreters' roles. They have to be clarified in order for practitioners and interpreters to reach a mutual understanding. Holding joint workshops with interpreters and practitioners could help avoid interpreters experiencing role tensions, as practitioners' expectations can conflict with those of interpreters, as learned during their interpreter training. This issue also has to be clarified with patients, and this involves a communication effort to transmit a clear message about the work interpreters can and can't do for patients. As some of the concerned populations are not very literate, the form of this communication needs to be creative (for example, information flyers will be of limited use).

It is necessary to establish criteria for the selection of interpreters. Being bilingual does not necessarily mean having the capacity to be a good interpreter. Beyond linguistic abilities, motivations for interpreting, human qualities (such as empathy), age, gender (have both male and female interpreters), and experience in health care should also be considered. As in our study, even if there is a limited population in which to find

qualified people, an effort should be made in the training of these interpreters.

CONCLUSION

Health-care institutions around the globe should consider and embrace diversity (gender, sexual orientation, age, culture, language, etc.), as it is what constitutes humanity and cannot be ignored. Disregarding it can lead to discrimination and abuse. Interpreters are the embodiment of cultural and linguistic diversity, but also of the possibility of mediating meanings between different worlds. Their integration into institutions is a necessary development in a globalized world.

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Academic Persistence for Students Involved in the Accelerated Education Program in Dadaab Refugee Camp

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ABSTRACT

The academic community has highlighted the lack of research into accelerated education programs (AEPs) in refugee camps. Furthermore, AEPs take different forms in different countries. Generally speaking, however, several AEPs in different parts of the world are known for their low attendance rates. Accordingly, this article presents the key barriers causing absenteeism or preventing students from continuing their education within the program in Dadaab Refugee Camp. Our study shows that humanitarian action itself plays a significant role in pupil academic persistence. Also, flexible schedules are not a solution to absenteeism in AEP.

KEYWORDS

Dadaab; education in emergencies; academic persistence; absenteeism; accelerated education program; refugee camp

RESUMÉ

La communauté académique a souligné le manque de recherches sur les programmes d'éducation accélérée (PEA) dans les camps de réfugiés. En outre, les PEA prennent des formes différentes selon les pays. De façon générale, cependant, plusieurs PEA dans différentes parties du monde sont réputés pour leurs faibles taux de participation. Par conséquent, cet article présente les principaux obstacles causant l'absentéisme ou empêchant les étudiant.es de poursuivre leur éducation au sein du programme dans le camp de réfugiés de Dadaab. Notre étude démontre que l'action humanitaire elle-même joue un rôle important dans la persévérance scolaire des élèves. L'étude démontre également que les horaires flexibles ne sont pas une solution à l'absentéisme dans les PEA.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Global Monitoring Report on Education, during the 2017 school year, 64 million children who could attain primary education are still out of school (UNESCO, 2018). Likewise, according to this report, 199 million youths worldwide are not enrolled in secondary school. Many of these children and youths are refugees; only 61% of refugee children attend primary school (UNHCR, 2019b). In comparison, the world average is 92% (UNESCO, 2018). This is worrisome, especially since as young refugees age, barriers to education only grow higher. In this regard, only 23% of young refugees go to secondary school (the world average is 84%), while only 1% of refugees will reach the university (the world average is 37%) (UNHCR, 2019b; UNESCO, 2018). Four million school-age refugees do not go to school, an increase of 500,000 compared to the 2017 school year (UNHCR, 2019b). Additionally, girls are particularly disadvantaged, being 2.5 times more likely to drop out of school than their male peers (UNHCR, 2019b). According to UNESCO (2015), conflicts remain a major obstacle to schooling, as a large and growing proportion of out-of-school children live in conflict zones. Furthermore, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012) estimates that 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by recurring cycles of violence and insecurity. The number of people displaced by armed conflict exceeded the 50 million mark in 2013, a figure unparalleled since the Second World War (UNHCR, 2016), and that has continued growing ever since. In fact, this number reached 74.8 million forcibly displaced people in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019a). As a result, the displacement due to an armed conflict or natural disaster frequently results in substantial periods of missed schooling for refugee children (Burde et al., 2015). With each missed semester or school year, there is a greater risk that children will be unable to return to formal education, which exponentially increases risks that threaten children's security, especially for teenagers (Benavot, 2015).

Responding to the needs of these children has increasingly led governments, UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to explore the possibility of providing accelerated education programs (AEPs) so that refugee children and youth can gain the equivalence of formal schooling and, if possible, return to formal education at their appropriate age and grade levels (Nicholson, 2014). After the Rwandan crisis in 1994, UNICEF launched the "Back to School" campaign, which implemented AEPs across dozens of crisis/conflict-heavy countries, becoming one of the most important education initiatives in international emergencies (Nicholson, 2014). Almost a decade later UNESCO (2011) states, "Accelerated programs can help them [youth] build the basic literacy and numeracy skills they need to return to primary school or make the transition to secondary school" (p. 254). Globally, AEPs have become the most common response to the overwhelming and widespread populations of out-of-school children and youth in conflict areas and natural disasters (Nicholson, 2014). One such example has been the case in Dadaab Refugee Camp since 2013 (Taylor, 2015).

Nevertheless, some studies from the scientific and grey literature indicate that learning outcomes for AEP students are often low (Shah, 2015). Furthermore, poor learning outcomes can result in a low rate of transition into formal education (Arvisais,

2016). In this regard, achievement is connected to attendance (Charlick, 2005; O'Gara & Kendall, 2000). Several AEPs in different parts of the world are also known for their low attendance rates (Ananga, 2011; Longden, 2013; Taylor, 2015). According to Nicholson (2007), low attendance can lead to dropouts. Therefore, a better understanding of the reasons leading to student absenteeism and eventual dropouts seems paramount, especially since the ultimate causes of these high absentee rates in AEPs are not well known (Shah, 2015). Thus, this research aims to identify key barriers causing absenteeism or preventing children and youth from continuing their education. The results are intended to highlight factors at play in student academic persistence, as well as absenteeism factors in the AEP implemented in Dadaab Refugee Camp.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

Researchers have drawn attention to the dearth of information on educational initiatives that meet the needs of children (Cooper, 2005; Sinclair, 2007; Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005). Fresia (2007) adds:

> These processes (educational services) still require greater study, be it in regard to their form or their consequences. With respect to the offer of educational services in camps, we could, for example, have a look at the impact that hybrid academic programs defined by various actors (international experts, the UNHCR, NGOs, ministries of education of the country of origin or the country of asylum, etc.) and taught by refugees, who are also political leaders in their groups, have on children's socialization (p. 114).

Processes like politicization, intermediation, or recovery within refugee camps remain largely unanalyzed in specific cases, particularly where standards and values (humanitarian, national, or local) conflict with one another (Fresia, 2009). With these conditions in mind, Lanoue (2006) states that researchers must address the matter of education in refugee camps (Arvisais & Charland, 2015; Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Therefore, the objective of this study is to help close this gap by generating knowledge about the factors affecting student academic persistence in the Dadaab AEP.

Theoretical Foundations

In order to narrow the range of factors that can influence student academic persistence, this research adopted Lewin's 1951 force field analysis model as applied to the education sector by Anderson (1985). The term "field" refers to the idea that there is a field of conflicting forces in the lives of individuals (Gagnon & Brunel, 2005). This theory proposes a dynamic perspective identifying the forces involved (internal/external, positive/negative) and postulates that behaviour represents a mechanism for preserving or restoring the homoeostasis of psychological and physical needs, thus underlining the interaction between individuals and their environment (Schunk et al., 2012). However, this contextual theoretical model, "based on the interaction between humans and their environment," and Lewin's theory of force fields posits that environmental conditions play the largest role in school persistence (Schunk et al., 2012). Thus, this model allowed the researchers to identify the driving and restrictive forces causing absenteeism and dropouts, with our emphasis in this article being restrictive forces (barriers). These forces that influence withdrawal or persistence vary in intensity and type according to individuals, groups, context, and educational initiatives (Anderson, 1985).

CONCEPTS

ACADEMIC PERSISTENCE

The concept of academic persistence has been very present in education science research (Holman et al., 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Reason, 2009). According to Holman et al. (2016)

> for this reason, much of the theoretical discussion has revolved around the factors that shape this psychological phenomenon, with little attention to isolating its manifestations and consequences on learning outcomes, namely retention, dropout intentions and achievement (p. 9).

Therefore, we define academic persistence as the individual's ability to direct personal resources towards academic achievement in order to complete the program, regardless of barriers (Holman et al., 2016; Duckworth et al., 2007). Given the interconnections between the individual and environmental factors in education within an emergency scenario, this article focuses on two key barriers to academic persistence: absenteeism and intention to drop out.

Accelerated Education Program

An accelerated education program (AEP) is a flexible, age-appropriate program that promotes access to education in an accelerated time frame for disadvantaged groups, such as over-age and out-of-school children and youth, who missed out or had their education interrupted as the result of poverty, violence, conflict, and crisis (Inter-Agency Accelerated Education Working Group, 2017). The goal of AEP is to provide learners with equivalent certificated competencies that they would gain in the formal system in an accelerated time frame. In this way, learners can transition back into mainstream educational settings or complete an entire primary cycle (Baxter et al., 2016). In short, it is non-formal education in support of the formal system. The goal of accelerated education is to ensure a rapid return to formal education for its students or learners (Baxter et al., 2016). These programs often condense about eight years of primary education into three or four years. Finally, these interventions are also called "catch-up" or "open schools" and are widely implemented in low-income and crisis-affected countries, particularly by UNHCR (Flemming, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

THE CASE UNDER STUDY

Dadaab refugee camp is located in a semi-arid region of Garissa County, Kenya, and is one of the most populous refugee camps in the world. Opened in 1992, Dadaab is also the oldest camp under UNHCR's responsibility. During the research period, the Dadaab complex hosted 332,455 refugees, or 78,092 households, 95% of which originate from Somalia. The population of Dadaab is very young, as 60% of refugees are 17 years of age or younger (UNHCR, 2019b). With regard to education, enrolment rates are low, as 51% of school-age children (3–17 years) remain out of school. Furthermore, only 13% of young people have access to secondary education (Taylor, 2015). This phenomenon is even more acutely felt by girls, with only 25% of secondary school students being female (Taylor, 2015). Moreover, according to a more recent case study, youth enrolment in Dadaab schools consist primarily of over-age students, with 41% of primary school students being older than 13 years of age (Flemming, 2017). According to UNHCR and its partners, the main reason for this sit-

uation was the prolonged and/or frequent breaks in youth schooling (Arvisais, 2016).

One solution employed to address this situation was the implementation of an AEP. The AEP was implemented in Dadaab camp in 2013. At the time of our research, there were nine NGOs administering AEP in Dadaab (Arvisais, 2016; Flemming, 2017). These organizations were coordinated by the Education Working Group, co-chaired by UNHCR's education sector and UNICEF. These organizations jointly implement formal education programs in 35 primary and seven secondary schools. At the time, the program had 4,848 students enrolled (Taylor, 2015). As elsewhere, the program objective is to enable children, adolescents, but also adults to return as quickly as possible to formal education at the appropriate age and level. AEP condensed contents while focusing on literacy and numeracy competencies using a learner-centred pedagogy and interactivity (e.g., teamwork, discussion, questions). In Dadaab, AEP curriculum is composed of three levels. It allows for two transitions to the formal system: (1) upon successful completion of level 1 the student can enter the fifth grade of formal school, and (2) upon successful completion of level 2, the student can enter the seventh grade. Finally, successful completion of Level 3 leads to primary level certification. The goal of AEP is to enable learners to make the transition to the formal school system at the primary, secondary, and vocational levels. Despite the success of this program in terms of enrolment, the academic persistence of students still remains an issue, as absenteeism and school dropout rates are high (Gomez, 2015).

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a mixed-method sequential exploratory design (Creswell, 2004). In addition to using mixed methods, this study takes an inductive approach, which gives priority to data, lived experience, and fieldwork, and then uses this knowledge within an iterative process (Guillemette & Luckerhoff, 2015). According to this design, the data collection has been carried out in two phases. The first phase (qualitative) was meant for purpose theorization and instrument design. The second phase (quantitative) was used to administer a survey questionnaire and validate the theory.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

INTERVIEWS (PHASE 1)

The lead researcher first conducted non-directive interviews in English with a convenience sample of employees from partner organizations (n = 6) and head teachers (n = 12). This step led to the design of a semi-structured interview guide and participant selection according to the snowball sampling method. The gradual construction of the sample, using references obtained from first responders, led the research team to conduct semi-structured interviews among AEP teachers (n = 18) and their students (n = 36). This round of interviews allowed us to identify a number of dropouts (n = 11) and also conduct semi-structured interviews with them. It is also important to mention that the participants who recently dropped out of their AEP were contacted with the help of each school's parent-teacher association.

The choice fell on a combination of non-directive interviews and semi-structured individual interviews because of the exploratory nature of this research, the lack of scientific literature (and the large amount of grey literature), and the complexity of its object of study. The objective was to build a solid, data-based theoretical framework. To

do this, we privileged the grounded theory method (GMT) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted in the Somali language by a team of data collectors composed of eight community workers, all of whom were trained by the lead researcher to carry out qualitative one-on-one interviews. This team was led in the field by a team coordinator from the host community and a lead researcher. A total of 65 semi-structured interviews and 18 conversational non-structured interviews with head teachers and partners were analyzed using GMT. All verbatim reports were analyzed line by line in a process referred to as "open coding" (Corbin, 1997). In the end, the contributive concepts were identified and certain phrases were marked as key quotes.

Survey (Phase 2)

The survey was administered in 11 schools within the five camps that constitute Dadaab. In total, 188 AEP students participated in the survey. **Tables 1**, **2** and **3** show the main characteristics of the sample. The survey was carried out during regular school hours. Some questions were about hygiene or female genital mutilation, so the survey was administered among female students in a separate classroom by a female team member. The bilingual questionnaires (English/-Somali) were administered in two different ways for reading comprehension. Primary school students also participated in an interview, and then a self-administered in-class survey was issued to secondary-level students. All questionnaires were retrieved by hand, onsite, and later transposed manually into a computer. The questionnaire was organized in three blocks of synonymous items for internal validity purposes. This allowed us to evaluate the internal consistency estimate of reliability for each subscale/concept of the questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha, see **Table 4**). All items about absenteeism were presented using a six-point Likert scale.

From the qualitative analysis of the interviews, for each factor (concept) that may have caused students to miss school, three items were identified in the questionnaire. As shown in **Table 4**, internal validity analyses made using Cronbach's alpha and the Pearson coefficient allowed us to confirm the consistency of 10 out of the 14 concepts created using the grounded theory method. Consequently, three items had to be treated separately—or rather, as entirely distinct concepts.

It was expected that a large majority of the students would not be able to read the questionnaire. However, we had anticipated and controlled reading skills ahead of time. In this way, the survey includes a question to verify students' reading skills in order to avoid randomly answered questionnaires, although this precaution could generate validity problems, such as experimental mortality. To avoid such a problem, we proposed to administer the survey through interviews at the primary school level. Before deciding upon this solution, we ran a self-administered test in the field with two samplings, the first one composed of primary-level students and the second one composed of secondary-level students.

For primary-level students, 66 participants answered the questionnaire, and only seven correctly answered the reading skill question. This is such a low result that it is even unlikely that the students could answer correctly by luck. Therefore, given the conclusion of the test, we decided upon the one-on-one interview solution, despite the method's potential drawbacks. For one thing, the method is time-consuming, and it might cause a social desirability bias, or what we call the "never"

effect in the survey. In this context, however, it was the only possible solution. For secondary-level students, the test was conclusive, with only 4 rejected questionnaires out of a sample of 70 students. Therefore, in light of the test result, and because it is the most organic solution and the most efficient method to produce good quality data, we decided to keep the self-administered strategy at the secondary school level.

Table 1
Implementation partners

Partner	%
LWF (Primary Level)	16 (n = 30)
NRC (Primary Level)	30 (n = 56)
RET (Secondary Level)	54 (n = 102)

Table 2
Age of Participants

Age	%
13 or less	6
ca. 14–16	19
17–20	41
21-25	27
26–30	6
31–40	2

Table 3
Genders of Participants

Gender	%
Female	28
Male	72

RESULTS

QUALITATIVE RESULTS (PHASE 1)

First, some general observations emerged from many of the student interviews: "Absenteeism is very common in schools." Teachers also made note of a general trend: "Boys' attendance is much better than girls'. Girls tend to miss classes more frequently than boys." According to a student named Nala, "If you miss the teacher's explanation of the topic, it is always hard to catch up with the other learners, and it will be very hard to continue in the program."

More specifically, the qualitative data reveal that food distribution is one main reason students miss school. This phenomenon mainly affects boys. As one student named Hussein noted, "I miss school during food distribution cycles with my brother when we are fetching our family rations." The same is true for Ali. When asked if he sometimes misses school, he answered, "Yeah, sometimes I go for ration collection during distribution days." Another of their colleagues, Omar, told us, "Mostly, I come to school every day, but some days I need to go like other boys to the distribution centre, so I miss school." Food distribution cycles have been identified as the most common cause of absenteeism, not just by students, but also by teachers. Teachers seem powerless in this situation, as they cannot prevent boys from collecting monthly rations for their families.

In addition, hunger can generate absenteeism. Idil told us, "The most frequent reason [to miss school] is when I miss my daily bread. I'm hungry. I cannot learn." Her colleague, Omar, said, "We don't have enough food at home.… Sometimes, I don't have something to eat. So I stay at home hungry." Most of the schools with AEP classrooms do not have a food program. Accord-

Table 4
Interal Validity

Concept/Factor	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	α
Domestic Work	I have to do domestic work	I need to fetch water	I need to find firewood	.738
Loitering	I prefer entertainment	I prefer to play football	I prefer to hang out	.670
Nutrition Problems & Food Distribution	I am too hungry	I need to find some food	I need to collect rations during distribution[a]	.719[b]
Intimidation	I am a victim of intimidation	I am a victim of peer pressure	I am afraid to walk to school	.708
Religious Education	I need to go to the madrassa	I need to attend another school	I prefer religious education	.666
Child Care	I have to take care of my siblings	I need to stay at home to take care of younger children	My parents are sick[a]	.646[c]
Sickness	I am sick	I'm not feeling well[a]	I am diseased[a]	.593[d]
Distance	The distance from home to school is too far	The school is too far away	The walk to school is too long	.877
Drug Use	I used drugs	I smoked or used drugs	I drank alcohol or used other substances	.653
Parental Responsibilities	I need to take care of my own children	I have parental responsibilities	I have to stay home with my children	.802
Paid Work	I have a schedule conflict	I need to work to get an income	I was not available at that time of the day	.694
Menstruation[e]	Because of my menstruation	Because I have my period		.728
FGM[e]	Pain due to female genital mutilation[a]	Because of genital pain[a]		.560[f]
Pregnancy[e]	Because I am or I was pregnant	Because I will have a baby		.645

[a] The Cronbach's alpha (.719) shown here is without the item "I need to collect rations during distribution." This item has been processed separately as a concept in itself labelled as "Food Distribution."
[b] The Cronbach's alpha (.646) shown here is without the item "My parents are sick." This item has been processed separately as a concept in itself labelled as "Parental Sickness."
[c] The reported Cronbach's alpha did not consider this item since it did not correspond well with the scale.
[d] The Cronbach's alpha for this item group was not reliable. Therefore, the item "I am sick" has been processed separately as a concept in itself labelled as "Sickness."
[e] These items were only administered to female students.
[f] The Pearson correlation for this item group shows no significant correlation. Therefore the item "Pain due to female genital mutilation" has been processed separately as a concept in itself labelled as "FGM."

ing to teachers, this is "due to a lack of financing."

Another important reason for absenteeism mentioned during the interviews is that some students have to work in order to generate an income. As one teacher expressed it, "Some of them [students] are asked to work for families for income by their parents." Assad said, "I work one day per week in the market and go to school the other days." Like his colleague, Mohamed also works at the market. He told us, "I work in order to have an income. I work in the market as a shoe-shiner." Other students participate in gathering activities as an income generator. For example, Dalmar stated, "I go to the forest to fetch firewood for sale." Just as with food distribution, paid work seems to affect male students primarily.

On the other hand, domestic work affects mainly female students. Faduma said, "I am just a girl. Girls and boys are not the same. Girls do housework. So, in the morning you might delay your departure to school due to this work." As another girl, Hani, shared, "I'm the oldest in our family. I help my mother. I fetch water and firewood. I also stay with the younger children." A similar comment was made by her peer Idil: "I do chores. I stay with my siblings. I wash clothes. I fetch firewood for cooking." Domestic and family responsibilities are also sometimes exacerbated by the fact that some students live without their parents. As Faduma pointed out, "Most of the students aren't with their parents in the camp." According to teachers, this is generally the result of the "death of a parent, or because they have returned to Somalia in order to find work, leaving the children safely behind in the camp." This situation puts more pressure on adolescent girls and may lead to a difficult reconciliation between family responsibilities and school.

Another obvious and common reason for being absent from school is sickness. However, according to teachers, "The difficult living conditions in Dadaab make it more frequent." As Ali said, "I am often sick, so I don't go to school for a day or two." Additionally, parental health also appears to have an impact on attendance. For example, Bashir mentioned, "When one of my parents is sick, either my father or my mother, I usually miss school." The same applies to his female colleague Amina: "When my father is sick, he tells me to stay with my siblings. My father is blind and I have a disabled sister."

One marginal factor that became clear from the interviews is that sometimes students prefer to play rather than go to class. We noted some statements to this effect, such as "I prefer to play outside," or "I want to play football [soccer] more." One student named Jamil mentioned, "Sometimes I miss school because I like playing at the playground. At the school there is no playground."

Lastly, but no less important, students like Uba mentioned, "There are times when we miss school because of violence at home or a fight between the students." To echo this remark, according to several teachers, insecurity plays a significant role in academic persistence. Finally, according to teachers, the UNHCR voluntary repatriation program represents an important source of dropouts.

Quantitative Results (Phase 2)

Quantitative results show that there is a significant split in the reasons that students miss school. The mean Likert score across all concepts shows that the reasons leading to absenteeism vary widely from one student to another. Although there are no dominant factors, certain factors stand out. **Table 5** shows the 12 questionnaire items with the

highest mean Likert scores. The 12 reasons listed in the table are the ones most given by students when declaring themselves absent from school.

Table 3 shows that domestic work as a whole (that is, work related to everyday tasks, eating, or even family responsibilities) is in large part why students say they miss class. Furthermore, the data show a strviewong correlation between the level of domestic responsibility and the absenteeism caused by the distance between the school and the home. All the items related to domestic responsibilities were strongly and positively linked with absenteeism because of distance: domestic work ($R = 0.713$, $p < 0.001$), taking care of siblings ($R = 0.622$, $p < 0.001$), and parenting ($R = 0.639$, $p < 0.001$). Although both parametric and non-parametric coefficients were significant and similar, only the Spearman coefficient results are reported here, given the non-parametric nature of our data.

Table 6 shows the main results by ranking the 12 concepts/factors with the highest meanLikert score, thereby helping us to establish the most common barriers to accessing the AEP (as a result of absenteeism). The most common barrier is that of food distribution, affecting adolescents and young male adults in particular. In girls, menstruation is among the highest causes of absenteeism. The other prevalent barriers are (1) distance, (2) student and parent health issues, and (3) religious education. Distance is strongly linked to several other factors, such as (1) reconciliation of family responsibilities and daily tasks, (2) peer pressure or intimidation, and (3) nutritional issues.

Table 5
Questionnaire items

Rank	I miss school because …	Likert Score Mean
1	I prefer to attend religious education	3.9
2	I need to go to ration collection during distribution	3.6
3	I have to take care of my siblings	3.4
4	I am sick	3.3
5	I need to fetch water	3.1
6	I need to find some food	3.0
7	my parents are sick	3.0
8	the walk to school is too long	3.0
9	I have parental responsibilities	3.0
10	because of my menstruation[a]	2.9
11	the school is too far	2.8
12	I am too hungry	2.6

[a] Administered only to female students

There seems to be a slight difference between the reasons leading to dropouts and those causing absenteeism. As shown from the qualitative analysis of the interviews in **Table 7**, socioeconomic factors (for boys) and cultural factors (for girls) are the dominant causes of dropouts, whereas domestic tasks and other factors associated with daily life are what most affect absenteeism.

Finally, in order to establish an absenteeism profile, we conducted an analysis by quartile. This analysis revealed that the profile of the most commonly absent student

(gender is not important in this matter) is in secondary school, is among the oldest students in his or her cohort, and has children. Regarding absenteeism, girls do not have a greater tendency to miss school than boys, but they still face a number of barriers, some of which are specific to their gender (menstruation and FGM, for example).

- Students who most often miss class (25% and higher) are almost all at the secondary school level. Those in the third quartile also tend to be at the secondary school level, in comparison to their counterparts in the lower 50% (of declared absentees).
- Of the students who miss class the least often (25% or lower), a significantly lower number have children when compared to their colleagues who miss class most often (50% and higher).
- Students who declared themselves absent more often (25% and higher) are older than those who are absent less often (50% and lower).

Table 6
Concepts

Rank	Barriers	Likert Score Mean
1	Food Distribution	3.6
2	Sickness	3.3
3	Nutrition Problems	3.1
4	Parental Sickness	3.0
5	Religious Education	2.9
6	Distance	2.9
7	Childcare	2.8
8	Menstruation[a]	2.8
9	Domestic Work	2.7
10	Parental Responsibilities	2.5
11	Paid Work	2.2
12	FGM[a]	2.2

[a] Administered only to female students

Table 7
Reported frequencies vs. questionnaire means

Rank	Reasons Leading to Dropout	Frequency in the Interviews	Reasons Causing Absenteeism	Survey Likert Score Mean
1	Domestic Work	30	Food Distribution	3.6
2	Paid Work	29	Sickness	3.3
3	Early Marriage	28	Nutrition Problems	3.1
4	Community Values	14	Parental Sickness	3.0
5	Food Distribution	14	Religious Education	2.9
6	FGM	9	Distance	2.9
7	School Supplies	8	Childcare	2.8
8	Parental Support	6	Menstruation	2.8
9	Childcare	6	Domestic Work	2.7
10	Parental Values	5	Parental Responsibilities	2.5
11	Repatriation	5	Paid Work	2.2
12	Loitering	5	FGM	2.2

DISCUSSION

The first observation is that the mean Likert score across all concepts seems to show that the reasons leading to absenteeism vary widely from one student to another, which conforms with the findings of the literature corpus. According to Charlick (2005), absenteeism varies widely and depends on many factors. While the study revealed no dominant reasons for absenteeism, certain preeminent factors stood out.

According to our study, domestic work as a whole (work related to everyday tasks, nutrition, or family responsibilities) is in large part why students miss class. As demonstrated by both the qualitative and quantitative results, domestic responsibilities are indeed the most frequent cause of school absences, especially for older students. Furthermore, according to the interviews, this seems to affect mainly female students. However, the survey results show that it affects both girls and boys alike. In this regard, our result converges with other studies. In fact, according to Sinclair (2007) and Tannir and Hroub (2013), students are often absent from school in order to support their household. However, our study provides additional insight by demonstrating that there is interaction between domestic responsibilities and the parents' level of health. The same applies to the distance between school and home.

Likewise, contrary to what Charlick (2005) argued, our results seem to show that flexible schedules as a solution to this problem have a low impact on attendance, even for Dadaab AEP students who have significant responsibilities at home. The AEP runs three hours less per day than the formal secondary schools. Students are present in class only in the morning. In the afternoon, the teacher gives homework assignments in the form of the module to be done at home. Teachers are usually available after class until 1 p.m. to answer students' questions. Originally, low attendance called for more flexibility. However, our results show that absenteeism remains high, despite flexibility. Our interview data tend to show that students feel less compelled to attend school regularly because of the flexibility of the program. This echoes similar findings from case studies (Flemming, 2017). The high flexibility of the program helps to increase enrolment from year to year. On the other hand, this same feature might lead to a steady decline in attendance. Our data show that about half of the students have a class attendance rate between 20% and 59%. Nevertheless, more research is needed to better understand the interactions between flexibility and absenteeism.

Additionally, the flexibility offered by the secondary-level program is causing a year-long delay in the program's completion, which means that the curriculum is no longer accelerated. For example, the accelerated curriculum is thus being completed in 4 years at the same pace as the formal program. This phenomenon might cause students to drop out, and contribute to creating confusion between the concepts of flexible scheduling and absenteeism among pupils. In this regard, the data lead us to believe that a better understanding of AEP goals within the community can contribute to reducing absenteeism and dropout. It is important to explain to parents and leaders that AEP is not a shortcut to graduation. Therefore, raising awareness in the community about real AEP objectives is even more necessary. This effort is also important for encouraging more girls to join AEP or school in general, as female students are largely underrepresented.

Alongside the phenomenon of domestic responsibilities, some tasks to support the

household, but performed outside the family environment, also seem to have a major influence on classroom attendance. For example, food distribution has a significant impact on male students. This is confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative data. Girls experience another type of problem also related to distribution: the distribution of feminine hygiene products, which also generates a similar cycle of absence as does food distribution for boys. In fact, for female students, menstruation and genital pain are among the highest causes of absenteeism. It is worth mentioning that this reason for school absence was not mentioned in the interviews at all, yet is highly significant and represented in the survey data, due in part to the sensitive nature of this subject. If anything, this shows and reinforces the value of a mixed methodology.

These two observations mark a step forward in knowledge on this subject. For boys as well as girls, these two barriers may cause absences of 5 to 7 days for each month of school. Both barriers are particularly structural, as opposed to socio-economic (i.e., paid work) or cultural (i.e., early marriage), as they are directly related to the organization of humanitarian aid within the camp. In fact, one may reasonably infer that these barriers are caused by the way in which food assistance and feminine hygiene products are distributed in the camp. These results show the predominant role of humanitarian action itself on pupil absenteeism. In light of the data, one may argue that the different facets of intervention conflict with each other in academic persistence. Beyond their role in survey design, the interviews allowed us to go deeper in interpreting the data. When juxtaposing the interview and survey results, the first finding is that the frequency of absenteeism declared by students for all concepts is lower than that mentioned during interviews by teachers and head teachers. Furthermore, on-site observations during survey administration reveal that students declare a lower frequency of absenteeism than their actual rate of absence.

The fact that "distance between one's home and school" is found high in the list of mean Likert scores seems to confirm the interview results. As such, distance is a more common barrier for students who have greater responsibilities outside of school. Indeed, as mentioned previously, our data tend to support the notion that distance affects the younger and more vulnerable students much less than the older ones, who potentially have more family responsibilities or paid work. It would therefore appear that distance is not necessarily a physical barrier, but rather a factor making school more difficult to reconcile with other daily life tasks. In addition to distance, intimidation seems to be a more common cause of absenteeism in schools in more isolated sectors. The reverse is also true: students in schools near residential zones or in sectors where other services are concentrated experience less bullying from other students, as in the two LWF schools located inside the Kambioos camp. Finally, according to the normative data collected, students from minority communities, such as the Ethiopian community, are more likely to miss school as a result of intimidation. Moreover, according to our results, hunger combined with distance tends to reduce attendance in the afternoon. In fact, a large proportion of students say they have to go home during the break to eat. For many, the significant distance between home and school forces them to be absent for the second half of the day. However, some studies performed in other contexts have found low conclusive evidence of a causal

link between attendance and school feeding (Penson & Tomlinson, 2009). That being said, our results are strong enough to allow us to maintain that a school feeding component can be a major factor in helping to reduce absenteeism in the Dadaab AEP.

Additionally, teachers do not seem to practise student-centred teaching, or teaching techniques that utilize diverse learning strategies, both of which are basic principles of AEP (Flemming, 2017). Lectures and recitations seem to exacerbate school dropout due to repeated absences from school. In fact, students who miss school regularly are no longer able to follow the lessons based on repetition. As a result, they often end up dropping out. This appears unsurprising, since AEPs' principles are unsuited for the conditions that teachers face while teaching (i.e., high student-teacher ratios and few educational supplies). Thus, a more traditional educational approach focused primarily on formal teaching and repetition is usually adopted. This matter also calls to mind another related issue. Somali is the most common language of instruction in AEP, but it is not formally taught (Arvisais, 2016). Indeed, during the interviews, some participants mentioned the impact this had on them. This has the potential to undermine the literacy skills of students as much in Somali as in English or Swahili, which can make the transition to formal school in Dadaab more difficult. In addition, it may also represent a barrier to integration in the Somali education system in the event of repatriation. This seems to be in line with the literature: according to Dryden-Peterson (2003), refugees often face significant language barriers in their schooling, which can affect school retention.

Finally, as the non-absenteeism-related reasons for dropouts are difficult to pin down using a survey, the qualitative data were very helpful in identifying trends. In fact, according to the interviews, repatriation is one of the most common causes of dropouts, but that fact is not mentioned in the surveys. Surprisingly enough, head teachers and teachers both identified voluntary repatriation as one of the most common reasons for dropping out, even though only a small proportion of refugees had benefited from this UNHCR program during the time of the study. Furthermore, as reported by Boisvert (2017), the same observation also seems to be widespread in the grey literature. However, this seems rather surprising, given the low proportion of refugees who had benefited from the UNHCR repatriation program at the time of the study. Indeed, official data indicate that only 1,454 school-age refugees had been repatriated to Somalia out of a population of 346,428 (0.4%) at the time of the interviews (UNHCR, 2019b). It is not possible to know how many of them were enrolled in the AEP. On the other hand, with only 4,848 enrolments, it is likely that the proportion of students otherwise enrolled in the program who have been repatriated is small. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to track dropout students and gain an understanding of or measure the effect that repatriation has on the dropout data. On the other hand, even if we were not able to measure this phenomenon using the survey, the interviews seem to reveal that repatriation does not play a significant role on dropouts.

The same applies to pregnancy and early marriage. The effect of pregnancy and early marriage on academic persistence is well documented in the literature (Shah, 2015). That being said, based on this research's specific objectives and design, it was not possible to circumscribe those factors. However, in many cases, the interview results align quite well with the field's literary corpus, so we may conclude that these two ele-

ments play a major role on school persistence. In conclusion, on the basis of our results, we recommend the implementation of an attendance-tracking system in each school in order to conduct interventions for those with chronic absenteeism. Also, we recommend the extension of the WFP project called Bamba Chakula. This project increases the flexibility of the food supply system and thus helps students to better balance their daily responsibilities with school.

LIMITS

As indicated earlier, the questionnaires were administered in two different ways: interviews and self-administered questionnaires. This may present a possible limitation to the research, as the results obtained using one method may differ from those obtained using the other. In the present case, the interview method is more likely to cause a social desirability bias (particularly on the more sensitive questions) in comparison to its self-administered counterpart, in which students can answer the questions with more privacy. In order to determine the extent to which this bias affects participant responses, we analyzed the results of three particularly sensitive items in the absenteeism section of the survey: drug use, entertainment, and pain caused by genital mutilation. Using the data from two subgroups, we compared the results of these items for the same age bracket (17 to 20) as a function of the means of administration. In this way, we could check whether students replying orally had given lower absence frequencies for all three sensitive items than those of their colleagues who had replied in writing. **Table 8** shows the results of this verification.

Table 8
Administration bias test

Categories	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Likert Score Mean Difference
Entertainment	.000	-1.26903
Drug Use	.032	-.38626
FGM	.485	-.75714

The outcome of this verification does not allow us to conclusively state whether social desirability had any effect on the results. However, it is possible for us to affirm with reasonable certainty that if this bias had an impact, it was significantly different for two of the three sensitive items. The mean deviation between absenteeism declared by one means of administration and the other is -0.80 on the Likert scale. It can therefore be said that students replying orally gave answers of almost one Likert level less (out of 6: never, very rarely, rarely, occasionally, very frequently, always) than their peers for the sensitive items of the questionnaire.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results produced by the inductive approach adopted for this research allow us to better understand what factors hinder access to education and affect students' academic persistence (absenteeism, which leads to dropouts). Our study revealed that humanitarian action (that is, distribution of food and feminine hygiene products) itself plays a predominant role in student academic persistence. The data also enable us to make hypotheses that may be validated in a future research project using a hypothetico-deductive method. We believe that this is an important step towards acquiring better knowledge of educational initiatives in a

humanitarian crisis, especially with regards to AEP. On the other hand, much still remains to be done, and future research should produce knowledge about the relationship between absenteeism and learning outcomes in AEPs. In light of our findings, insecurity should also be analyzed to understand its role in student performance, persistence, and achievement. Hence, further research must investigate the interaction between those concepts. Our work focused on academic persistence constraints. We did not study the driving factors among students or the best practices among school staff. Future research should address these issues. Finally, it would also be useful for researchers and practitioners to do a comparative study between the AEP and the formal school.

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"I Have Big, Big, Big Dream!": Realigning Instruction with the Language-Learning Needs of Adult Syrians with Refugee Experience in Canada

Li-Shih Huang

ABSTRACT

This article reports on a study involving multiple sources of data that captured adult Syrian refugee learners' unique language-learning needs by developing and implementing needs assessment surveys; conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the learners and teachers; and analyzing the learners' oral production. The insights gained from the analysis of direct data (the learners' oral production) and indirect data (content analysis using NVivo 12 Plus of the learning needs reported by learners and teachers) are intended to inform the work of researchers conducting needs assessment as well as the practices that are applicable within and beyond the Canadian context of instructors and material developers working with English-language learners who are refugees.

KEYWORDS

Syrian refugees; adult language learners; language training; needs analysis; resettlement; integration

RESUMÉ

Cet article fait le rapport d'une étude impliquant plusieurs sources de données qui cerne les besoins singuliers de réfugiés syriens adultes en matière d'apprentissage linguistique en développant et en mettant en œuvre des questionnaires d'évaluation des besoins; en réalisant des entrevues semi-structurées approfondies avec les apprenants et les enseignants; et en analysant la production orale des apprenants. Les renseignements obtenus à travers l'analyse de données directes (la production orale des apprenants) et de données indirectes (analyse de contenu des besoins rapportés par les apprenants et les enseignants à l'aide de NVivo 12 Plus) visent à guider le travail des chercheurs effectuant de l'analyse des besoins ainsi que les pratiques applicables à l'intérieur et au-delà du contexte canadien des formateurs et développeurs de contenu travaillant avec des apprenants de l'anglais langue seconde qui sont réfugiés.

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), from 2015 to 2019, 48,085 Syrian refugees resettled in Canada. Faced with limited funding and resources, Canada is having to address enormous language-training challenges in its efforts to resettle this unprecedented arrival of refugees (UNHCR, 2021). As some

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recent headlines have described, cities across Canada are encountering critical problems in language training for adult Syrian refugees (e.g., Carman, 2016; Rolfsen, 2016; Waisman, 2018). Yet as then Immigration Minister John McCallum has pointed out, "Official language training … is fundamental to successful settlement," and "there's very little in terms of welcoming newcomers that is more important than language" (O'Neil, 2016).

Canada's language-training program for immigrants—Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)—has played a pivotal role in the federal strategy for integrating immigrants. This approach, which combines refugees and newcomers together, is designed to help immigrants and refugees integrate into Canadian society by providing English or French (the official languages) language training, along with knowledge about Canada (Huang, 2021b). For the LINC program, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) is used to assess learners' proficiency levels. The CLB standard is a descriptive scale of language ability in English as a Second Language (ESL), written as 12 benchmarks along a continuum of progression from basic and intermediate to advanced abilities (Jezak, 2017; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, n.d.-b). IRCC's overall evaluation of the LINC program found that 80.7% of learner respondents had registered in the program "to improve English for daily life" and "to get a job." Still, the program's dropout rate can be as high as 25% (IRCC, 2012). A more recent report also indicated that "no CLB progression was noted" for 43% of those who accessed IRCC-funded LINC programs between January 2014 and March 2016 and that the number of hours needed to progress one CLB level in four language domains (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), varying by different factors (e.g., age, educational level, CLB level before entering the program, etc.) averaged 524.5 hours (IRCC, 2017, p. 30). Moreover, the 2016 employment rates for male and female Syrians with refugee experience who had resettled in Canada were only 24% and 8%, respectively (among those, 53% were government-assisted Syrian refugees) (Houle, 2019). Similar results from research in Europe have identified notably less positive employment outcomes for refugees who arrive with low (first language) literacy levels (e.g., i Solé, 2014).

In the words of Sam Nammoura, a refugee advocate, "The longer any newcomer has to wait to learn English, the longer they must wait to get a job and settle into their new life in Canada. To find a job, to integrate, to provide for the family, for better opportunities—English is very essential" (Klingbeil, 2016, n.p.). As Nelson and Appleby (2015) have argued, learners' voices are needed to provide "a potentially powerful source of insights that could, and indeed should, be driving the design, delivery, and evaluation of education programs for these students" (p. 325); in turn, research on these matters should inform the professional development needs of instructors as well. In line with Nelson and Appleby's call, the present study—part of a multi-year project designed to address the language-training issues faced in Canadian cities because of the recent arrival of Syrian refugees—was undertaken in order to identify these refugees' unique language-learning needs.

CONTEXT: SUPPORT FROM THE LITERATURE

Lack of language skills necessary for living and working in a new country is one of

the most critical barriers faced by refugees (e.g., Kirova, 2019; Khabra, 2017), whether—in the case of Canada and other English-speaking countries and in the context of this study—it is English for general or for specific purposes (e.g., for work in a specialized field). In determining what a particular group of learners needs to learn, as well as how and why, the term "language-learning needs" may involve multiple perspectives and factors (Hyland, 2006; Long, 2005). Since the 1970s, with the advent of learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning, scholars have suggested various theories, models, and frameworks for analyzing language learners' needs (e.g., Dudley-Evans and John, 1998; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). With them have come a wide array of terms associated with the concepts of needs and needs analysis, including *objective* and *subjective* needs; *perceived* and *felt* (or expressed) needs; *target-situation* (e.g., skills needed to perform competently), *learning-situation* (e.g., preferred way of learning), and *present-situation* (e.g., current skills and language use) needs analyses; *product-oriented* and *process-oriented* needs; and *necessities*, *wants*, and lacks (e.g., Basturkmen, 2010; Flowerdew, 2018; Ozdemir, 2018). Needs analysis is important because the results are key to identifying the linguistic features and communicative practices, skills, and competencies of the target groups. Understanding learners' needs is a widely accepted starting point for designing and implementing a language course. By extension, context-specific needs analysis is fundamental to designing tasks and developing courses and materials. Researchers also generally agree that collecting and applying information about learners' needs is pertinent to specifying the objectives, procedures, content, materials, methods, and outcomes assessments at the task, course, and program levels (e.g., Basturkmen, 2010; Flowerdew, 2018).

Yet as Hyland (2009) pointed out, "Needs are not always easy to determine … because they mean different things to different participants" (p. 204). Since the 1980s, numerous studies on language-learning needs assessment have examined the needs of learners of English as an additional language using a variety of data collection methods that focus on different areas, skill domains, and contexts. Study results have highlighted the learner-specific and context-dependent nature of language-learning needs. Needs analysis in the English for general-purposes setting, however, remains understudied as a result of the diversity and lack of specificity compared to English for specific or academic purposes (Ozdemir, 2018). Empirical research has also revealed that language-learning needs are learner-specific and context-dependent (Huang, 2010; Long, 2005). The unique situation of Syrians with refugee experience in the English-for-general-purposes context thus calls for a learner-centred approach and must start with understanding these learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, experiences, and needs (e.g. Fang et al., 2018a; 2018b; Huang, 2021a; Kirova, 2019).

Learners with Refugee Experience

Canada is one of the leading countries admitting refugees for permanent resettlement (Sevunts, 2019; UNHCR, 2021). But although these constitute a group of learners with distinct language-learning needs, research examining these needs in Canada has been scant. Benseman's (2014) qualitative study of New Zealand identified common challenges (e.g., psychological trauma, management of dislocated families) and learning issues (e.g., dealing with abstractions, learning appropriate norms of

behaviour, following instructions) faced by 36 adult refugee learners from 10 different countries and with limited education. Of Benseman's proposed strategies for instructors, very few items (2 out of 23) seemed specific to the particular needs of learners with refugee experience (e.g., teacher's "understanding that learners' previous trauma can be played out in the classroom … in the form of constant headaches, difficulties in concentrating on tasks, and ongoing health issues" (see pp. 100–101 for the full list). Windle and Miller's (2012) study of low-literacy, refugee-background students in Australia highlighted the lack of instructional resources needed to scaffold learning and the time needed to progress through the curriculum and to develop learners' autonomy. More recently, the study by Miller et al. (2014) of secondary school learners and teachers similarly pointed out the teaching challenges in planning, which stemmed from diversity in student competence, lack of time, heavy workloads, and limited resources. The study concluded that "teaching was not guided by well thought out unit and lesson plans grounded in evidence-based understandings of their students and their needs," but instead "tended to be directed by intuition and a set of enacted habits" (p. 46). Studies have identified beneficial pedagogical approaches, including, among a wide range of strategies, the use of bilingual instructional support for adult learners (e.g., Benseman, 2014) and children with refugee experience (e.g., Madziva and Thondhlana, 2017). These approaches integrate learners' prior lived experiences and views into instruction (Nelson & Appleby, 2015). Finally, in the publications and resources reviewed by Ratkovic et al. (2017) in the Canadian context, only 59 relevant sources had been written or published between 1997 and 2017 about refugee (non-Syrian-specific) students in kindergarten to the 12th grade. Their review underscored "a lack of instructional data on supporting refugee students in the Canadian classroom" (p. 3) and concluded that "further studies exploring the academic, psychological, and social challenges refugee students face, and the strategies they use, are critical" (p. 21).

Few studies focused on adult refugee language learners have been situated in Canada or within the LINC context specifically. In this context, the knowledge gap on refugee students' integration (Ratkovic et al., 2017), and the specific needs of Syrian adult refugee learners is glaring. The need for the present study is further supported by research showing that LINC programs lack suitable curriculum material and consistency in the levels of courses offered and support delivered across Canada (e.g., Jackson, 2013). Specifically, the study's goal is to identify the specific language-learning needs of Syrians with refugee experience from the instructors' and learners' perspectives in order to inform practices for those practitioners who support these learners.

FOCUS OF THIS RESEARCH

This study[1] used a mixed-methods design (Ivankova, 2015), gathering multiple sources of data—both indirect (i.e., surveys and interviews) and direct (oral language production)—capturing the specific language-learning needs of Syrians with a refugee background. Mixed-methods research "enables researchers to seek a more panoramic view of their research landscape, viewing phenomena from different viewpoints and through diverse research

[1]This study was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Table 1
Instructor Profiles

Characteristics	Details	Distribution
Gender	Female	70.6%
	Male	23.5%
	Preferred not to be identified	5.9%
Age	25–29	5.9%
	30–39	17.6%
	40–49	29.4%
	50–59	41.2%
	60 and above	5.9%
Highest degree	BA	29.4%
	Post-graduate diploma	11.8%
	Master's	52.9%
	PhD	5.9%
Experience living in countries where Arabic is spoken	No	76.5%
	Yes	23.5%
Years of teaching experience	Under 5	11.8%
	6–10	29.4%
	11–15	29.4%
	16–20	11.8%
	20 and more	17.6%
Years of teaching in LINC program	Under 5	47.1%
	6–10	23.5%
	11–15	23.5%
	20 and more	5.9%
Experience in LINC program	Pre-literacy	46.6%
	LINC 1	73.3%
	LINC2	46.6%
	LINC3	60.0%
	LINC4	46.6%
	LINCS	26.6%
	LINC6	20.0%
	LINC7	13.3%

lenses" (Shorten and Smith, 2017, p. 74). Our research addressed three key areas of inquiry: (1) Syrian learners' language-learning needs from the instructors' perspective, (2) Syrian learners' language-learning needs from the learners' perspective, and (3) Syrian learners' language-learning needs gleaned from their own oral production.

PARTICIPANTS

The study involved survey responses fully completed by 17 LINC instructors and 14 learners, followed by individual interviews with 8 instructors and 9 learners. The learners all came to Canada as government-assisted refugees; at the time of the surveys and interviews, 36% reported that they were employed (range: two months to one year; fields: painter, housekeeping, tile setter, pharmacy assistant, and plumber). **Table 1** and **Table 2** present a profile of the survey participants.

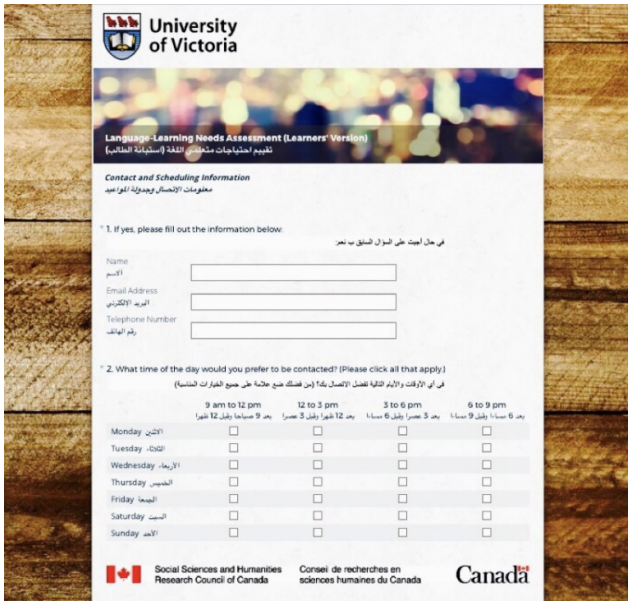

Figure 1
Online Needs Assessment Survey

Table 2
Learner Profiles

Characteristics	Details	Distribution
Gender	Female	7.1%
	Male	92.9%
Age	20–24	28.6%
	25–29	14.3%
	30–34	14.3%
	35–39	7.1%
	40–44	28.6%
	45–49	7.1%
Education	No formal education	7.1%
	Grades 7–9	14.3%
	Grades 10–12	42.9%
	Technical/vocational education	7.1%
	University (dentistry, pharmacy, mechanical/-civil engineering, and agriculture sciences)	28.6%
Years in Canada	Under 1	7.1%
	1–2	92.9%
Current levels	CLB Stage I	78.6%
	CLB Stage II	21.4%

Note. N = 31 (LINC instructors: n = 17; learners: n = 14) from the survey. CLB (Canadian Language Benchmarks). Stage I (CLB 1–4): Initial Basic Ability; CLB Stage II (CLB 5–8): Fluent Intermediate Ability; CLB III (CLB 9–12): Developing Advanced Ability.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Following the procedures for survey development (e.g., Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2009) and the author's previous work (Huang 2010, 2018), two versions of the Language-Learning Needs Assessment Survey were developed, piloted, and refined before being distributed via the institution-supported SurveyMonkey platform. The learners' version of the survey (**Figure 1**) consisted of seven sections with 38 items:

1. survey information and informed consent page;
2. contact and scheduling information (for learners who expressed interest in being contacted for a follow-up interview);
3. personal information (e.g., age, gender);
4. educational background;
5. language background (e.g., first language, previously learned languages, formal language-learning experiences);
6. professional information (e.g., primary field of work prior to living in Canada, previous jobs in Syria, communication skills associated with these jobs); and
7. current use of English (e.g., languages used in Canada, confidence about English communication, current CLB level, areas they felt they needed to work on, and ways language training programs could help them improve their communication skills for personal, social, and/or professional purposes).

The instructors' version of the survey covered all sections included in the learners' version, but the 27 questions geared specifically toward LINC instructors included ones eliciting information about language-teaching experience and training. This section included questions about whether the instructors had lived in an Arabic-speaking region and if they were proficient in Arabic (and, if so, at what level). Unlike the learners' version, the instructors' version contained an additional 11 questions eliciting information about their experiences with the LINC program, their instructional approaches and methods, their Syrian learners' language-learning needs, and the instructional challenges of teaching the LINC program at specific levels, reflecting on their recent and current experiences.

Individual participants' responses were then used to develop interview questions that would guide the interview, which we tailored to each participant. The average number of guiding questions was 20, and the questions were presented in the same order used in the survey so that participants could refer to their previous responses in case they were unable to recall what they had said. This allowed us to seek clarification on their responses and ask them to elaborate.

Learners' oral production data were elicited through an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Speaking test. The test involved asking the participants to respond to questions about themselves and their families, to speak about a topic, and to engage in a longer discussion on the topic (Huang, 2013).

Three steps were undertaken in collecting data:

1. The survey link was sent to LINC instructors through LINC providers across Canada whose contact information

was publicly available (as per institutional guidelines; ethical protocol number 17-275). Eighty messages were sent, and 41 instructors accessed the survey, with a completion rate of 41.5%. For the learners' version distributed through the LINC providers, among the 20 who accessed the survey, 14 completed it, with a completion rate of 70%. In both cases, it was possible to calculate only the completion rate, because learners and instructors may have forwarded the survey link to their peers, making a response rate impossible to calculate accurately.

2. With each survey completed in full, the respondent gave permission to be contacted for a follow-up interview. A mutually convenient time was scheduled by phone or email, and the semi-structured follow-up questions were developed based on each survey respondent's answers.

3. All interview sessions with instructors were conducted by video-conference, and all learners' interview sessions were conducted at the places of the participant's choosing (e.g., at the institution where the author works or at the learners' home). Learner participants outside British Columbia all declined to participate in the interview remotely because of their discomfort with video-conferencing tools; travelling across Canada to conduct face-to-face interviews was unfeasible. For these reasons, interview opportunities agreed to by these learners were not pursued.

Prior to each interview, verbal consent was obtained from each participant by reminding those interviewed that they could refuse to answer any question and could stop at any time without needing to provide an explanation, that their identities would be kept completely confidential, and that only code numbers would be used for all files and the dissemination of findings. Learners were administered the IELTS Speaking test after giving consent but before being interviewed. This sequence was used to simulate the test-taking situation as well as to allow for the possibility that their oral production might be of use to them when they reflected on and reported their language-learning challenges.

Each participant's survey responses were then made available to them during the interview, and all interviews were recorded using both QuickTime Version 10.0 audio-recording and a digital voice recorder as a backup. The interviews were conducted by two interviewers. Each interviewer took turns asking the guiding or follow-up questions, while the other recorded any notes for follow-up. The interviews lasted from one to two hours in English and/or Arabic, whichever language participants felt most comfortable using to express their thoughts.

For the data analysis, survey responses were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively (those responses from the open-ended questions). The interviews were transcribed verbatim by three transcribers and checked for accuracy. Including the responses to the open-ended questions from the survey (9,471 words) and the interview transcripts (instructors: 76,833 words; learners: 72,427 words), 158,731 words from both sources were uploaded to NVivo 12 Plus (QSR International, 2018) for qualitative coding and analysis. The final code structure contained 20 parent nodes, with 2,645 individual unique codes, for a total frequency count of 5,419 codes. The entire coding process and cycles are described in Huang (2019).

The assessment of learners' oral production was rated on the basis of the scoring

criteria established by IELTS and CLB (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, n.d.-a; Huang, 2013). Learners' oral production data were first rated by two raters according to the CLB and IELTS Band scores. Any disagreements about ratings were discussed until complete agreement was reached. The oral production data elicited using the IELTS Speaking test were also transcribed fully for analysis by two coders with training in applied linguistics. The focus was on accuracy (Housen & Kuiken, 2009) in the domains of vocabulary (defined by "using vocabulary with precision"), coherence (defined by "speaking coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features and developing topics fully and appropriately"), and grammar (defined by "producing consistently accurate structures"), with a total of 1,247 coding decisions.

RESULTS

Major themes emerging from the data on instructors' perceptions about their work teaching Syrian learners revolved around their perceptions about the Syrian learners in general (n = 20), their instructional approach at the LINC level (n = 43), their instruction at CLB Stage I (Initial Basic Ability; n = 124) and Stage II (Fluent Intermediate Ability; n = 43) and in general (n = 36), learners' own language (L1) use (n = 54), and LINC program feedback (n = 169). We coded 489 items from the instructors' perspective.

When asked about their *general instructional approach across levels*, the instructors reported that their main foci in speaking were (1) use of repetition to establish routines, (2) spelling strategies, and (3) basic conversations. Reading involved sign reading or memorizing words for reading, vocabulary centred upon meaning-form mapping and word recognition, and listening involved instructors' self-created short paragraphs or stories for comprehension. Writing focused mainly on letter combinations.

For CLB Stage I, individual and paired work were the key formats used to attend to basic linguistic usages for daily interactions and sociolinguistic (cultural norms and nuance) needs. Few instructors used community-integrated learning strategies (e.g., visits to gardens, banks, and museums) in addition to their use of basic listening comprehension tasks. Teaching related to employment was mentioned only three times—once involving reading a truck-driving manual, and twice during conversational tasks related to car parts.

For CLB Stage II, mention of community-integrated learning included, for example, visiting a farm, participating in activities at the local art gallery, speaking to an elementary school class about the learners' refugee experiences, and visiting a medical centre. For other language domains, listening involved comprehension types, pronunciation involved form-focused games that included practice with segmental features (i.e., those discrete units or segments that constitute the basis of a sound in speech), and vocabulary learning generally involved explicit teaching of meaning-form mapping and rote learning. Reading focused on vocabulary learning through generating word lists, and writing included journal keeping and error correction.

Overall, the *instructors' perceptions of Syrian learners* indicated a consensus about their learners' abilities to acquire skills in listening and speaking. As one instructor put it, "A lot of the teachers in my school have commented how the Syrian population in particular … their listening and speaking develop much faster in English than perhaps people from other places" (I16). Another said, "They tend to be very good at picking up things orally; they kind of have [a] superpower like

that" (I20). Instructors working with learners with post-secondary educational experience in Syria noted that "some of them have been professionals with university degrees before, and those are just really quick learners" (I17).

At the CLB Stage I levels, however, instructors perceived learners' frustration about the speed of their progress. As one put it, "We're seeing a lot of frustration among Syrian students" (I07). Another instructor said, "They're frustrated in how long it's taking them, especially their reading and writing, to learn because they want to go … to enter the workforce.… I don't blame them. I feel frustrated for them too" (I16). Yet another instructor reported that "many of the CLB 1 students in particular are frustrated or become frustrated about moving up…. Three months later, they still don't have enough English to have a simple conversation" (I32). Another noted, "Everyone in my class has been there for over a year. Some two years, and they are not even at Level 1 literacy" (I18). Learners' attitudes toward the future were more short-term in relation to their status, their learning about the need to pass LINC 4 for citizenship or work, and the slow progress they were experiencing through the levels. As articulated by one instructor:

> I get the impression that most Syrian refugees don't really know what they're going to do in Canada … that once they're done [with] level 4, they're not interested in going any further than that … and they are frustrated in how long it's taking them to learn English because they … want to enter the workforce.
>
> *(I16)*

The instructors also shared their observations regarding their learners' use of technology and mobile devices, or else their attitude toward technology-mediated instruction: "They don't like [the] online component thing" [I16]. As another instructor put it, "Low computer literacy but great with a cell phone" (I03). Another stated, "They'll do everything on their phones and they're good.… Syrians are some of the fastest learners in the world" (I20).

Instructors also commented on their work supporting learners across CLB Stage II, on issues related to critical thinking skills, cultural expectations, and employment-related concerns. Two perspectives emerged from the data: first, that learners just needed the language knowledge to activate critical thinking skills. As one instructor explained,

> Many of [my] students, Syrian learners, have done high school or university classes. Presumably they would have learned critical thinking in those areas…. I guess one perspective could be that they simply need the language literacy in order to use their critical thinking skills in a language learning environment.
>
> *(I32)*

The second perspective tended to view Syrian learners as lacking a critical approach to ideas, opinions, and concepts. One instructor reported the absence of the development of critical thinking skills in CLB Stage I and the challenges of moving learners beyond rote learning, or what he called "matching," toward a "free association kind of learning" (I01). For learners at CLB 6 and 7, the issue also "tends to be critical thinking, details, depth, nuance. Certainly vocabulary, advanced vocabulary is a challenge, not because of the vocabulary but because they never read anything. So they only have the spoken vocabulary that they can deal with" (I31).

Comments on gender differences were mixed: some instructors saw it as a non-issue, while others noted that women tended "to socialize through other women first" in group work, but also "worked well with men" (I20). Another commented, "The men want to get a job because they need to provide for

the family, so they're focusing on their listening and speaking so that they can get a job, more so than the reading and the writing" (I12).

Regarding teachers' perceptions of *learners' own language use*, the perspectives varied, but most reported limiting the use of first language (L1) in their classrooms. As several instructors noted, "I prefer they do not use it when I am teaching them, unless I ask them to" (I35); "We had to set norms, and I, as a teacher, kept saying, 'No Arabic,' at regular intervals of time" (I12); or the use of L1 was "only for comprehension emergencies … when all else fails" (I29). This approach mirrored what was reported by learners. For example, one learner reported that

> the use of a non-English language was completely prohibited. And they catch any students using different language other than English,… they're gonna given him homework, and he's gonna have to finish it in five, six hours. And he gets, the student gets a red card. So, like, he gets like less points or it counts to his history in the program, so it was very difficult.
>
> *(L03)*

While own language use was discouraged, most instructors recognized the benefits of L1 use in navigating communication obstacles, increasing learner confidence, appreciating cultural differences, building learner community, increasing efficiency in teaching, lowering affective filters, establishing trust, and maintaining cultural identity. For example:

> When I first started,… I tried to suppress the Arabic, and that was totally the wrong approach. Now I embrace [it] … they're all Syrians, and … a couple of students are much higher … so I ask different people to write the Arabic so that they can appear side-by-side. Total embrace of the Arabic. It's helpful and it makes them feel more comfortable that there is also the community, and bonding with each other.
>
> *(I16)*

Most reported being judicious about L1 use in the classroom, to ensure that learners would not overly rely on L1 translation. Some instructors attributed learners' lack of progress to their need to use their own language at home. For example:

> Most are terrified that their children are not going to remember their culture or their language. And for probably about a third of my students, just that reason alone is why they don't progress. Because they go home and they speak their language with their kids as much as possible, because they're desperate to try and keep their kids in that culture and in that language, and they don't want to lose it for the next generation.
>
> *(I02)*

For the *program feedback* theme, instructors reported on the LINC program's strengths and limitations across levels (literacy: $n = 23$; CLB Stage I: $n = 91$; CLB Stage II: $n = 23$; overall: $n = 32$). At the literacy level (positive: 30.4%; negative: 69.5%), the strengths pointed out by the instructors touched on the nature of the program, which enabled them to gain a sense of personal meaning and reward for what they did. Regarding limitations, central issues were the lack of English training for employment purposes and for meeting learners' needs, the length of time required to complete CLB Stage I, and space limitation for enrolment.

At Stage I (positive: 39.5%; negative: 60.5%), the strengths highlighted by the instructors included the use of community-integrated learning approaches; the task-based, practical approach to teaching; the development of learners' confidence in speaking; and the program's mission, which was to help with settlement and integration. The limitations shared by instructors focused, for the majority of codes, on the lack of alignment of learners' needs with instruction, the mismatch between learners' needs

and employment-related language training, and the inadequacy of materials suitable for meeting learners' needs. In turn, these added to issues related to teaching preparation time and compensation, the financial resources needed to support the community-integrated learning activities, the challenge of implementing Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, nd b), and teachers' lack of preparation to deal with refugee learners and mixed-level classes. For CLB Stage II (positive: 57%; negative: 43%), comments on positive aspects included the program's focus on grammar, error corrections, and the target language culture, along with use of technology to mediate learning. The limitations noted by instructors were mainly lack of relevance to employment, shortage of level-appropriate materials, and class sizes that were too large.

Of the instructors' comments about the program in general (positive: 25%; negative 75%), positive comments focused mainly on personal learning through their work supporting this group of learners and celebrating their success stories. Instructors also commented negatively on some recurring issues already noted, ranging from the assessment of learners' progress, to class size, waiting lists, learner lack of progression through levels, unavailability of ready-to-use materials and resources, and inadequate professional development support.

Identified Learners' Needs and Teaching Challenges

Regarding *learner needs* identified by the instructors ($n = 441$), 76.42% of the codes pertained to the needs of learners at the literacy and CLB Stage I levels. At the literacy level ($n = 54$), among the skill domains, speaking skills (e.g., functional language use in everyday greetings, small talk, asking for help, confidence building) were mentioned most frequently, followed by writing (e.g., letter formation, formatting, writing personal information), reading (e.g., text direction, phonetics, basic signs), listening (e.g., listening for functional needs, basic listening skills), and computer skills (e.g., basic computer literacy, email). Other needs related to numeracy and personal circumstances (e.g., family, work).

The following examples demonstrated the need to develop basic literacy skills: "It's really starting at the basics … particularly [for] the Arabic speakers… [L]etter formation, writing, being able to put words on paper … is a huge problem for Syrians, especially at the lower levels" (I20). As for personal circumstances, one instructor empathized:

> They gotta work. They have this struggle between wanting to go to school and get the CLB that they need in order to either get citizenship or go to college, but they gotta pay their bills…. I don't know what the answer is for them because I get it, you know … and they have children as well.
>
> *(I07, Huang, 2021b, p. 62)*

For CLB 1 ($n = 104$), the skill domain most frequently identified as needing support was speaking ($n = 21$) (e.g., functional needs that cover daily activities, asking for help, giving instruction, small talk, conveying personal information), followed by reading ($n = 19$) (e.g., alphabet and basic signs, stories, reading for meeting functional needs, text direction). Then there were the domains of listening (e.g., basic instructions, conversation, daily function) and writing (e.g., writing for functional purposes, spelling, text direction) (with $n = 15$ each). Other codes included basic computer skills, becoming familiar with Canadian cultural and classroom norms, and dealing with cultural shocks and personal circumstances ($n = 11$).

For CLB 2 (*n* = 31), the needs identified were evenly distributed across skill domains. Some of the common codes included needs related to pronunciation, asking questions, use of modals, listening for reduction, vocabulary, reading strategies, and grammar.

The needs reported by the instructors at CLB 3 and 4 (*n* = 67) touched on similar issues in three of the four skill domains (speaking: asking questions, pronunciation, social and work interactions; reading: vocabulary, strategies, cultural literacy; listening: vocabulary, reduction, functional needs). For example: "It's specific jargon they have difficulty with. What was the one—plunger. Plunger, nobody knows how to say *plunger*. They all call it toilet CPR" (I20). What was uniquely highlighted at this level were learners' concerns for citizenship and employment purposes (*n* = 13). As one instructor put it,

> What we're seeing—because of the citizenship requiring the 4 in the speaking and the listening … that's what they want. They want speaking and listening. Last week I said, 'We're focusing on reading and writing for the next two weeks,' and some of them were just not interested in that at all. We do have class beginning, not just for Syrian students but any students for citizenship, and we're focusing on listening and speaking, and that's all they want.
>
> *(T12, Huang, 2021b, p. 61)*

For CLB 5 (*n* = 47), the needs extended across speaking (e.g., fluency, spoken grammar, pronunciation, idiomatic expressions), reading (vocabulary, syntax, strategies), listening (e.g., vocabulary), writing (e.g., grammar), English for academic purposes, and English for specific (employment-oriented) purposes. As one instructor pointed out, "Quite a few are trying to increase their CLBs to 6 so that they can enter the EAP program at colleges" (I04).

Finally, for instructors who commented on CLB 1 to 6 together (*n* = 81), needs related to English for employment and certification featured most prominently (*n* = 46), followed by computer skills, writing (e.g., grammar, topic development, rhetorical patterns), speaking (e.g., pronunciation of vowels at the segmental level, accuracy, critical thinking, cultural awareness), and listening (e.g., vocabulary, strategies).

With respect to the *teaching challenges* identified by the instructors (n = 180), those at the literacy level (*n* = 17) included dealing with L1 use, attendance, basic computer skills, cultural knowledge and sensitivity, learners' negative attitudes about placement, overconfidence, resistance to formal language use, and lack of level-appropriate pedagogical resources. Teaching challenges at CLB Stage I (CLB 1 to 4) (*n* = 96) involved a wide range of issues about cultural expectations related to time, teacher-learner boundaries, classroom behaviours (*n* =14), attendance and attention spans arising from personal circumstances (*n* = 13), and classroom L1 use (*n* = 11). Other issues included group work, learners' lack of literacy and exposure to technology, the managing of learners' expectations regarding progress, lack of reading habits, learning and teaching mismatches on employment needs, identifying and balancing diverse needs, academic literacy in learners' L1, challenges in implementing PBLA, and perceived language interference from learners' L1.

For CLB Stage II (CLB 5 to 8) (*n* = 79), the issues revolved around PBLA, learners' frustration with their levels of progress, and dealing with their preferred learning approaches. The observation by one instructor captured several issues and challenges in supporting learners:

> I just think that the cultural shock piece is underidentified. The learning style, the rote learning, the memorization approach to learning is underidentified. Lack of education in their own culture

> has not been identified. When there are adults with grade 1 and grade 3 education, who don't have any understanding of grammar or language in their own language, that hasn't been identified. Conceptual literacy needs to be looked at…. Right now, I'm working 40 hours a week, being paid for 26, and I'm the one that's funding all the educational material … so I'm totally tied and limited to what I can do, unless I do it myself, and I know I'm not unique in this problem.
>
> *(I01)*

Reflecting on their challenges, the participating teachers shared their recommendations at different proficiency levels (*n* = 139). For CLB Stage I, the recommendations were wide-ranging, including tailoring instruction to appropriate needs assessment, dividing language training into two streams (English for specific purposes focused on employment needs, and English for general purposes focused on daily functional needs), cultural awareness training for instructors, employment-tailored instruction, better alignment of materials with the PBLA requirements, support for assessment, involvement of more real-world tasks that meet learners' needs, community-integrated learning, ready-to-use pedagogical materials, and crisis or trauma management resources.

Learners' Perspectives

Perceived instructional approaches. The learners' description of their instructors' general instructional approaches generated 245 codes with several themes. At CLB 1, learners perceived the instructors as generally focusing on functional needs and daily communication in speaking. In the transition to CLB 2, instructors began to explicitly discourage the use of L1, translation, or an e-translator. Reading focused on personal stories, and work on writing was minimal, with attention to spelling. For CLB 3, the approach involved explicit instruction in grammar and the use of personal stories to teach reading, speaking, and writing. For listening, word recognition was emphasized, and involvement in peer interactions also increased. For CLB 4, there was a notable shift in the focus on writing to include essay writing and research. Speaking involved conversations and discussions primarily, and reading focused on developing comprehension and fluency. Reading, speaking, and writing also received greater attention at the CLB 5 level, with the work described as similar to that at CLB 4, except that in the speaking domain it also included presentations and aspects of the appropriateness of language use in interpersonal communication. Listening activities generally involved listening to recorded passages and responses to comprehension questions.

Learners commented on their preferred learning and teaching approaches (*n* = 53) related to instruction only at CLB levels 2 to 5. For CLB 2, they reported preferences for communicating with the teacher or speakers of English as a first language, reading information relevant to employment, listening to stories, and using pair-work in speaking. For CLB 3, preferences included social interactions, explicit grammar instruction, and conversation with instructors. CLB 4 preferences included face-to-face learning over technology-integrated modes, rote learning, and reading/listening with comprehension questions. For CLB 5, learners reported preferences for receiving explicit feedback, writing narratives, and completing multiple readings to develop greater reading comprehension.

Regarding reported *strategy use* (*n* = 68), learners at all levels reported substantial use of Google Translate and YouTube (*n* = 22). These tools were used widely by learners at CLB 1, and at CLB 2, learners reported using them to practise speaking and writing. At

the other end of the language-learning spectrum, learners at CLB 5 still reported using these tools, with Google Translate identified as a way to help practising pronunciation. As learners' comfort and familiarity with English grew, they increasingly explored English-language music and movies. At CLB 5, learners also noted an attention to language learning related to professional or employment purposes (e.g., university lectures and medical certification).

The specific *learner needs* identified across CLB 1 to 5 included 197 codes, within which codes relating specifically to career and employment constituted 43.1% (n = 85). Needs reported at CLB 1 were mainly functional (e.g., visiting doctors, filling out forms, reading official documents, interacting socially, and building confidence) and language skills required for future career goals (e.g., certification for electricians). At CLB 2, learners identified needs in two overarching categories. First, employment-related language-learning needs were identified, including language requirements for certification, transportation, work in the food and beverage industry, automotive certification, and employment-related communication. For example, one learner said, "I come to Canada in eleven months, I study English, 'what your address, what your name, what's ahh, how many have children, what name your children, how old are your son'—where is this work? Not work, it's not really for test or work-related" (L13, Huang, 2021b, p. 61). Second, learners identified needs related to their personal circumstances: in addition to the language requirement for citizenship, learners reported challenges to language learning such as childcare, time constraints, accommodation of work and language/certification studies, and the limited times and locations of program offerings.

For CLB 3, language-learning needs focused mainly on the target situation needs, while the four language skills needed to pursue post-secondary studies and employment remained a central focus for learners in a wide range of fields (e.g., software engineering, security, food and beverage, transportation, performing arts, aviation engineering). For example, one learner said, "I need to remember all the technical words for trucks, the inside of the truck … in order to pass the test" (L06, Huang, 2021b, p. 61).

The language-learning needs for learners at the CLB 4 level related to passing the certification exams required for medical professions (e.g., pharmaceutical science, medical science, dentistry). Reading and speaking were the two skill domains identified in relation to field-specific reading (e.g., anatomy, pharmacology, microbiology, physiology), speaking (doctor-nurse and doctor-patient communication), and field-specific terminology. As one learner stated, "They did ask the IELTS [score from] us, but what I need are special English courses and classes, preparing us to the Canadian Dentist Board examination. You have five years" (L19, Huang, 2021b, p. 61).

For CLB 5, the needs reported mainly concerned specialized vocabulary, grammar (e.g., sentence structure, prepositions), speaking (e.g., for functional needs in medical, government, and social/interpersonal communication), and writing (e.g., for certification exams). The reported language-learning needs were aligned mainly with their expressed future career goals (e.g., civil engineering, nursing, pharmaceutical consultation, education). As one learner said about learning a specialized vocabulary, "I have to translate a lot of word. Tissue names, cell names. So I have to translate to Arabic or to Turkish to understand. I know it and I studied it and I practised this work, but

… I have to memorize … know the name of tissues, name of cells, and I don't have any knowledge about this" (L17). He further commented on his learning needs in oral communication: "[I] have to explain, consulting people about their using medicine, about the benefit, what's the opposite … make advice for them, to lead [to] better health, to use their body or what they have to practise, which would be to avoid, which to use" (L17). Another learner stated that he "will need writing for researching … to make plans … engineer always have many plan, so writing is very important for me" (L05).

Learners also perceived a lack of fit between the language courses they took and their perceived needs (n = 128). One learner shared his frustration: "Not every day the same information, the same, the same.… Same English today for Monday grammar, Tuesday listening, Wednesday speaking" (L04). Another CLB 2 learner said, "I learn from YouTube more than I learn from [institution]" (L13). This sentiment was echoed by instructors; one reported, "We had program evaluations today, actually, and … it got quite heated in my class. There were students who were very upset.… They said, 'At this rate, I'm never gonna pass the certification or get a job"' (T16, Huang, 2021b, p. 62).

When learners were asked about their perceived overall confidence level in the key domains related to employment, 72.7% expressed confidence in reading, 63.4% in speaking, 45.5% in listening, 45.4% in technology-mediated communication, and 36.4% in writing. With respect to skill domains where they felt they greatly needed help, the majority identified all four domains: 83.3% for reading, speaking, and listening; 100% for writing; and 58.3% for technology-mediated communication.

When asked about how language-training programs might help them improve their communication skills (n = 69), learners generally had difficulty articulating specific recommendations, but they pointed out general areas, such as Canadian culture and English for general purposes (with a focus mainly on reading, speaking, and writing), English for certification purposes, English for employment purposes, English for academic purposes, and technology-mediated communication.

Regarding *oral production*, during the interviews all learners mentioned their desire or need to reach a band score on the IELTS for study, immigration and citizenship, or professional certification. The results from the qualitative analysis of errors identified 36 themes, with a frequency count of 1,257. Among the errors, grammar issues had the highest percentage (n = 654, 52.74%), followed by coherence (n = 312, 25.16%) and vocabulary issues (n = 274, 22.10%). The top 10 deviations identified in each criterion were word choice (vocabulary) (n = 151), incorrect or missing determiners (grammar) (n = 109), hesitation (discourse) (n = 74), tense error (grammar) (n = 73), preposition (grammar) (n = 66), missing verbs (grammar) (n = 57), reference (discourse) (n = 48), pluralization (grammar) (n = 45), missing subject (grammar) (n = 40), and incorrect derivation (vocabulary) (n = 39).

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lacking the necessary language skills for living and working in a new country is one of the most critical barriers refugees face; in this case, the lack is of English for general or for specific purposes (e.g., for work in a specialized field). The prevailing approach to implementing language training for newcomers in Canada has combined immigrants with refugees. While these learners do have common experiences, such as learning to

use a different language, navigating identity issues, and adjusting to life in a new country, myriad variables also deserve consideration. Learners with refugee experience are a distinct group of learners because of the unique circumstances they have had to face involving, for example, being forced to migrate and resettle in a place they did not choose, loss of family and community, interrupted education and work, trauma, and post-traumatic stress. The unique situation of Syrian learners with refugee experience—whether encountered locally, nationally, or internationally—calls for an approach to teaching English based on the reality that one size does not fit all (Kirova, 2019; Lindner et al., 2020). Instead, learner-centred and communicative approaches must start with understanding the learners' backgrounds, experiences, and needs.

Here the discussion is bracketed within the limitations of a small-scale study involving 31 LINC instructors and Syrian learners with refugee experience in Canada, with only one female Syrian learner completing the survey in full; those who volunteered to participate in the follow-up interview before completing the survey were all male. Thus, the results should be considered within this context.[2] The goal of the research, however, is on the transferability of the inferences derived from the research to other instructional settings or contexts, and not about generalizability (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; 2017).

Align Needs and Instructions

Instructors and learners appeared aligned in their perceptions that the language training provided and received did not generally meet the language-learning needs for citizenship, academic studies, or employment. Putting aside growing concerns regarding language policies that have led to establishing different thresholds of language proficiency and the requirement for meeting thresholds that are placed on non-English-speaking immigrants and refugees for these purposes (Annable, 2019; Huang, 2021b), instructors need to seek ways to create personal relevance by considering learners' needs, since these have clearly been sources of frustration for learners and instructors alike. Both the present (e.g., current skills and language use) and target situation (e.g., skills needed to perform competently) analyses—along with insights from the present study regarding, for instance, learners' perceived needs, preferred instructional methods, and preferred learning strategies—could enable instructors to better align their teaching with the needs that learners, even at low CLBs, are able to lucidly articulate in navigating program-specific assessment guidelines and external, proficiency-level requirements for specific purposes.

Share and Build Ownership in the Process

In addressing the perceived lack of personal relevance experienced by learners and rec-

[2]The survey on learning preferences in the context of English-for-employment conducted in 2020, while still showing a much lower response rate by female respondents, does reveal a slight change in the survey response patterns (male: 72.74%, n = 723; female: 26.96%, n = 268; prefer not to say: 0.3%, n = 3); this change might be attributed to the increase in technology use during the COVID pandemic. Naturally, the participant profile in the present study raises a question about whether learners of different genders might have reported different needs and preferences and whether their perspectives, if different, would have further informed the development of the training program. A study with a larger sample size that factors in other learner variables (e.g., education level, gender, etc.) merits researchers' consideration, especially given Canada's new resettlement target of 36,000 set for 2021, the highest since 2016 (Paperny, 2021). Having said that, the profile of those who volunteered to participate in the language-training program for employment as derived from this study attracted 2,242 responses (Huang, 2021b), and the profile of the participating learners who have completed the language-training program includes 52% females and 48% males. This balanced participation appears to lend some support to the transferability of the findings and the program beyond the profile of the sample in this study.

ognized by instructors, it is essential that instructors draw on learners' previous professional, lived, and learning experiences and their current real-life communication needs in order to implement participatory learning. This integration, in turn, will allow learners to be involved in negotiating lesson goals, content, methods, and formats to enhance ownership and agency (Nelson & Appleby, 2015). This approach may also address what the teachers and learners recognized as Syrian learners' preferences for a more teacher-driven approach to learning and the prioritization of communicating with teachers over other learners as the primary source of learning (e.g., Ćatibušić et al., 2019).

Strengthen Employment-Related Language Training

The survey data included learners' and instructors' comments about Syrian learners in the LINC context, which were interpreted with the profiles of the participants in mind. What emerged in the data were two distinct groups of language learners: adult refugee learners with limited L1 education, and learners with professional skills and experience. What also emerged in the results *across all CLB levels* were learners' overarching, real-world language-learning concerns about the target situation needs for citizenship and employment, and their awareness of needing social interaction for their language development and a sense of belonging in their host communities. The prominence of concerns over seeking employment is also reflected by the mention of the terms "work" and "employment" 592 times (instructors: 232; learners: 356) across all data sources. In line with Ghadi et al.'s (2019) analysis, the participants "were primarily concerned with securing employment and they were not convinced that their language classes were a means of doing so" (p. 77).

Integrating employment-focused lessons or tasks suitable at CLB Stage I especially deserves serious consideration. This recommendation is in line with findings of the Evaluation of the Settlement Program report (2011/2012 to 2015/2016) (IRCC, 2017), which concluded that learners "who utilized 'occupation specific' language training are the most likely to improve and need the least training hours, on average, to increase 1 CLB level" (p. 30). Similarly, the report by Sturm et al. (2018), which focused on the blended-learning LINC course "Edulinc," also showed that "requests for employment and/or profession-specific language instruction" were among the top of learners' requests (p. 7).

Focus on Vocabulary

Research has shown that learning a language and attaining needed proficiency are a key challenge for newcomers in gaining access to employment, pursuing further education, and integrating into the host community (Ghadi et al., 2019). Our data and analyses of learners' oral production point to lexical as well as sentence- and discourse-level issues (22.10%, 25.16%, and 52.74% of the identified errors, respectively) that could further inform instructors' practice and the development of associated pedagogical materials. As reported by Lu (2012), lexical variation (i.e., the total number of different word types in proportion to the total number of words) measures were found to be significantly correlated with test-takers' rankings of oral production. The evidence in the literature supporting the relation-

[3]A detailed analysis and discussion of measures related to the lexical profiles of the participants' oral production (e.g., lexical density, lexical sophistication, lexical diversity, mean segmental type-token ratios, and lexical variation) (Lu, 2012; Read, 2000) in order to detect areas where needs might emerge was excluded in this article, at the journal's request. The analysis placed greater

ship between lexical variation and the quality of test-takers' oral production[3] suggests that instructors and learners may consider prioritizing focus on the range of vocabulary.

Reconsider Learners' Own-Language Use

With respect to using the learners' own language, while the approach of individual instructors varied, the general approach appeared restrictive toward L1 use. Instead of regarding use of the learner's own language as needing to be minimized, instructors and learners alike should learn about the languages and writing systems that learners already know, and to view their L1 literacy as a foundation for building their target language competency—in other words, using the "asset-based approach" (Warriner et al., 2019, p. 6; Huang, 2021a) to facilitate learning.

The instructional efficacy of taking a monolingual approach has been critically questioned through research across fields (e.g., Hall and Cook, 2012, 2013). Cognitively, prohibiting lower-level learners from using their own language to facilitate learning a new one can cause cognitive overload. Socio-linguistically, using the learners' own language helps build rapport and relationships among learners and between the learner and teacher. Pedagogically, judiciously using the learners' own language can make it easier to manage tasks or classes when establishing a framework for classroom work. On ethical grounds, denying learners the use of their own language works against affirming their cultural and linguistic identities (e.g., Block, 2007; Brooks-Lewis, 2009). As Warriner et al. (2019) have suggested, having "a more nuanced view of who refugee-background learners are, their existing linguistic resources, and their uniquely challenging life experiences will help teachers recognize possible ways to leverage resources" (p. 6). Instructors can thus use this knowledge to make their teaching accessible, relevant, engaging, and meaningful, especially for refugee learners with low CLBs.

Develop Flexibility in Instructional Formats

As gleaned from the results, one direction worth considering is the mobile-assisted blended learning approach (cf. Edulinc courseware; see Sturm et al., 2018), given the learners' lack of progression through CLB levels reported by both learners and instructors, their notable preferences for mobile-assisted technology, their strong resistance to computer use, and their need for flexible class-time options or program scheduling to accommodate their work and family commitments. The expressed need for flexible class-time options is in line with the report by Sturm et al. (2018), in which 42.2% of the reported learner requests were related to flexible class times and online options. The lack of progression echoed the findings from the Evaluation of the Settlement Program report (IRCC, 2017), which found that, for "43% of [the learners] … no CLB progression was reported," and that learners took, on average, 486 hours to progress one CLB level in the speaking domain (p. 30).

Enhance Community-Integrated Learning

Few instructors reported that their integration of community-integrated learning, though limited in scope, had positive outcomes. Key stakeholders—LINC providers, local businesses, non-profit organizations, material developers—should consider inte-

focus on the relationship between learners' lexical profiles and their abilities to communicate by speaking because of their limited oral proficiency. Readers may contact the author to obtain the results.

grating language learning with community interactions to respond to learners' needs and their specific volunteering or employment preferences. For learners, ample research has found wide-ranging benefits of this approach in the affective, cognitive, social, and cultural spheres (see O'Connor, 2012). A local needs assessment could be conducted to identify areas of community need for potential partnerships in line with learners' needs, and to develop a resource checklist before making decisions about sample lessons that can tie in learner and community needs (e.g., working as interpreters at local clinics, schools, and social service agencies; engaging in language and cultural activities at local libraries and community centres; assisting local charities, etc.). This two-way approach could help learners to develop their target language use and cultural awareness while informing them about local services and community events. It may also foster social connections between learners and the local communities to enhance community building and the integration of refugee learners (Clifford & Reisinger, 2019). Ultimately, language learning is a socially embodied process that aims to benefit not only individual learners with refugee experience, but also the communities they seek to join.

Develop Ready-to-Use Tasks and Pedagogical Materials

A recurring thread in the analysis was the lack of lessons or tasks and accompanying ready-to-use pedagogical materials tailored to learners' specific needs and appropriate to their different levels of L1 and L2 proficiency. Drawing on the insights gained from sources both direct (oral production) and indirect (needs from the teachers' and learners' perspectives) could contribute to developing a set of field-based lessons suitable for different CLB levels. For example, the field-testing of English for employment lessons tailored to learners from CLB 1 to CLB 5 is underway (Huang, 2021a), using a range of positions (based on employment statistics) suitable for employment at various proficiency levels. Taking an asset-based approach (MacSwan, 2018; Warriner et al., 2019) to learners' linguistic backgrounds, lived experiences, and perceived needs and approaches has the potential to make the LINC program—especially during the crucial initial stage (years one and two) of refugees' settlement experience in a new country—more attuned to the needs and preferences presented in this study. In order to tailor teaching to these refugees' specific needs at different levels of English language proficiency, programs and pedagogical resources should be developed that meet the vocational needs and transferable skills required of Syrian learners with low CLBs, and the certification requirements demanded of those higher-level CLB learners with professional designations prior to arrival. This in turn might help alleviate the frustration acutely felt by learners about their lack of progress and personal relevance. Further warranting critical attention in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is the dearth of rigorous empirical research examining product- and process-oriented outcomes assessment for evaluating the implementation of instructional approaches, methods, and materials and the observations of in-class instruction involving refugee learners.

CONCLUSION

The settlement of newcomers and refugees in our community is of vital concern to everyone. As Martani (2020) pointed out, "All refugees resettled in Canada … face early integration challenges, starting with

language: the wait for language instruction is long, it is not job-specific and is not suitable for people who have low levels of education" (para 4). With the hope of contributing to the efforts to resettle Syrians with a refugee background by helping them more readily acquire the communication skills they need to function in Canadian society, this study examined data gathered from LINC instructors across Canada and local refugees in British Columbia in order to develop an evidence-based instructional approach and inform the development of pedagogical resources for newcomers. The desired result is to better align training with the reported needs of adult refugee learners, who face unique situations and have unique experiences (e.g., Ćatibušić et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2014).

One learner expressed his heartfelt aspiration at the end of his interview: "I have big dream. Big, big, *big* dream. Bigger than this earth!" (L16). Providing pathways for learners to pursue their individual dreams must begin with understanding their backgrounds and needs, and being aware of individual circumstances and contextual barriers to learning and instruction. As urged by Ćatibušić et al. (2019), "There is a strong consensus on the need to identify appropriate practices and interventions so that the varied and complex [learning] needs, … particularly [of] the most vulnerable, are addressed" (p. 3). To this end, needs assessment is the starting point in making evidence-based decisions about suitable practices and interventions to pursue for informing, providing, and assisting the crucial work of language training. These discussions are critical in facilitating the integration of refugees into Canadian society and the workforce.

Clearly, a myriad of individual learner and teacher, instructional, contextual, and institutional variables interact within the language-training process. The process is never a simple one, nor does it have a one-size-fits-all solution. Pedagogically, this study has contributed to developing an instructional approach and associated materials that directly address the needs of instructors and learners (Huang, 2021a). Socially, the research can assist the work of language training critical to facilitating refugees' integration into Canadian society and the workforce. Ethically, the study assists with breaking down barriers by developing a theoretically grounded and empirically supported approach to language training. This, in turn, helps refugee learners to acquire the communication skills they need for employment, thereby contributing to strengthening equity, diversity, and inclusion in Canadian society.

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Book Review

Irene Tuzi[a,b]

REFERENCE

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. (2020). ***Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing Refugee and Migrant Journeys across Disciplines*** . UCL Press, 2020, pp. 529. ISBN (hard cover): 9781787353176

In *Refuge in a Moving World*, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh brings together over thirty authors from different disciplines to discuss the idea of refuge. Originating from the academic network called *Refuge in a Moving World* at University College London, this edited volume challenges the monolithic representations of refugees and displacement and proposes a more nuanced understanding of the history, causes, experiences, and responses to refugeehood. Set against the notion of "crisis", this book challenges representations that have dominated the public humanitarian narrative in the past decades. Indeed, to counteract widespread xenophobic responses to migrants and refugees around the world, humanitarian actors have often created "pro-refugee" narratives that have "securitized" displaced people (p. 2) and limited their agency. They have portrayed refugees as victims and passive recipients of aid, as "ideal refugees" "worthy" of humanitarian assistance, or placed them into categories of exceptionalism—such as what Fiddian-Qasmiyeh calls the "super refugee". These narratives generate inclusion and exclusion and keep displaced people "in their place" within a framework of epistemic violence (p. 3). To challenge these representations, this volume presents displacement and forced migration not as something that people simply experience, but as experiences to which people respond.

The volume is organised into four thematic parts. In the first we find eight contributions discussing the complexity of researching refugeehood. From different perspectives, these chapters critically reflect on creative methodologies, including participatory research approaches (p. 23), autobiographies, and interdisciplinary approaches. For example, the authors in this section create "intersections between academic modes of knowledge production and artistic expressions" (p.107). They reflect on how to write about the camp (52) and how to use visual

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approaches (e.g., film) to talk about forced migration (p. 94). The second part includes nine chapters and focuses on responses to displacement. Through artistic interventions and research papers, these chapters explore how people and organizations engage in different forms of responses to displacement. For example, the authors in this section explore the visual politics of the "refugee crisis" through the images of Alan Kurdi (p. 166) or the systemic exclusions of groups of migrants, through rhetorics of distance and proximity offered, for example, by the LGBTI asylum advocacy to engage a wider public in "caring for the plight of LGBTI asylum seekers" (p. 145). The third part reflects on the intersections between individual responses to displacement and external interventions. The five chapters included in this section focus on well-being and coping (p. 289) and the question of resilience in displaced children (p. 306), and they discuss "acceptable and unacceptable forms of homophobic harm" (p. 273). This part invites analyses between lived experiences and external interventions in a wider historical and contextual perspective. The final part includes ten contributions that use empirical research to explore how migrants and refugees in eastern Africa, the Middle East, and Europe negotiate living, working, and learning in the space of displacement. For example, the authors reflect on how the construction of apolitical refugee camps in prolonged displacement creates spaces of resistance (p. 382), or on how the allegedly neutral and depoliticized humanitarian assistance is based on nuanced understandings and practices of neutrality (p. 415). Other chapters investigate the question of long-term refugee camps and how these settings affect education (p. 362), or use Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland as a political allegory to discuss the spatial politics of displacement (p. 440).

Overall, this book's contributions are centred on four leitmotifs: time, space, relationality, and interdisciplinarity. The authors suggest that in order to understand ways in which refugeehood occurs, it is imperative to emphasize temporal and geographical modes of analysis. In this way, it is possible to avoid an "ahistorical and presentist account of displacement" (p. 4), which does not offer a comprehensive understanding of how people experience it and respond to it. Relationality is equally significant, as the authors suggest to focus their analysis on interconnections between people, organizations, states, and other actors, as well as the nature and implications of these interactions. In this volume, relationality is also expressed through the intersectional analysis of different experiences of displacement and the power structures they create. This helps to consider refugeehood not as a phenomenon on its own, but as part of larger processes. Finally, interdisciplinarity is the approach through which this volume analyzes displacement and the perspectives that can be employed to study it.

Interdisciplinarity is also one of this book's most significant contributions. Placing social scientists, urban planners, artists, activists, and other interlocutors in conversation with each other greatly enriches the scholarship on forced migration and displacement. Indeed, refugeehood has often been analyzed from monolithic scholarly perspectives without involving a wider public in the debate. Moreover, the diversity of experiences and voices presented in this volume are tied together by the concept of agency in a way that is innovative and includes, for example, contributions from authors who personally experienced displacement. The second most important contribution of this volume is its ability to go beyond academia

and to speak to a wider public. Bringing the scholarly discourse about displacement outside academia and making it accessible to a wider public is greatly needed to undermine the concept of "crisis" and the binary understandings of refugeehood and refugees.

Precisely in light of its interdisciplinarity and accessibility, the book proposes to change the approach towards displacement. With a view to decolonise the discourse around forced migration, it places the onus on "the refuge" instead of "the refugee." In this sense, it problematizes the ways in which knowledge is produced and it fits into the wider framework of decolonization around forced migration.

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Book Review

Naoko Hashimoto

REFERENCE

Yonekawa, M. (2020). **Post-Genocide Rwandan Refugees: Why They Refuse to Return Home: Myths and Realities.** Springer, 2020, pp. 136. ISBN (hard cover): 9789811067563

Post-Genocide Rwandan Refugees by Masako Yonekawa is a critical, poignant, and distinctive work based on the author's expertise in the field of forced migration in the region. Taking into account historical trajectories and regional geopolitics, the book argues that the involuntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees since 1996 was a de facto refoulement organized through a convergence of interests. The governments of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania, and the United States, as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, all participated in the refoulement. Indeed, Yonekawa maintains that the UNHCR's invocation of the cessation clause of Rwandan refugees' status in 2017 was completely premature and jeopardized the refugees' very existence. The reasons include the precarious conditions in Rwanda and the numerous security incidents, such as the assassinations of the political opponents against President Kagame and the physical attacks against civilian refugees in Uganda, Zambia, the DRC, and Tanzania. Readers are naturally led to question if Rwanda is truly a "successful model" in spite of the socioeconomic developments facilitated by the "genocide credit" for the past two decades. The author forces us to ask for whom it has been a success, if at all.

The book makes major contributions to the current literature in its research methods, critical views of the UNHCR, and direct challenge to the legal concept of genocide. First, in its methodology, the book combines historical process-tracing since the 1950s and direct personal interviews with refugees to depict a living contemporary history. On the one hand, the historical account provides an indispensable background on what led the old-caseload Tutsi refugees to embark on an armed repatriation in 1990–1994, itself an important prelude to the 1994 genocide—and its domestic and regional aftermath. On the other hand, individual interviews with 86 Rwandan refugees in 10 countries in Africa, Europe, and North America offer indispens-

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able perspectives on how they experienced the events unfolding since 1994.

The second contribution is the author's position on the UNHCR. Yonekawa analyzes how the UNHCR's policy evolved over 20 years from facilitating voluntary repatriation to imposing returns, forcing repatriation to Rwanda mainly from neighbouring countries—tantamount to a de facto refoulement—and the gradual activities that followed the announcement of the cessation clause to its invocation. The cessation invocation theoretically meant that no Rwandan who left the country prior to 1998 should be recognized as a refugee in certain African countries. Yonekawa, a former UNHCR field officer in Rwanda and former UNHCR head of field office in Goma in the eastern DRC, questions the accountability of the UN refugee agency. The repatriation of refugees was a politically and economically preferred option among all major stakeholders—other than the refugees themselves. The newly formed Tutsi-led Rwandan government wanted as many refugees as possible to return in order to legitimize its authority at home and abroad; the neighbouring host governments of DRC, Tanzania, and Uganda all wanted to reduce their "burden" and to minimize the potential volatility of hosting a large number of refugees; and the major donor governments—particularly the United States—preferred a decreased number of refugees in order to justify its reduced financial aid. Amidst such an interest convergence among key actors, could Sadako Ogata, then high commissioner, still have rejected pro-repatriation pressures? This question remains contentious for those who study international relations. The United Nations is an intergovernmental entity fully dependent on financial contributions from member states, so how and to what extent can a UN agency autonomously and independently devise its actions and policies?

The third contribution of the book is its conception of genocide. The author depicts how refugees interpreted the UNHCR announcement of the cessation clause as an official denial of their presence in the world. Worse, the UN Security Council's labelling of Hutus as génocidaires in 2014 made Hutus conceal their identity at the risk of fostering what Yonekawa calls "psychological insecurity." Some refugees were traumatized not only by their experience during the 1994 genocide but also by the ensuing local, national, regional, and international developments over the next 25 years, such as the continuous security incidences targeting dissidents and opinion leaders or the invocation of the cessation clause. That the Hutu population felt abandoned and betrayed by the international community could be described as a "second genocide." Yonekawa forces us to refocus our attention on the relevance and importance of the psychological component of the genocide definition outlined by Article Six of the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Thus, the book provides an important case study to re-examine not only the viability of a pro-repatriation solution to a refugee situation but also a re-examination of genocide as a concept in international criminal law.

No piece of writing is immune to constructive criticism and Yonekawa's work is no exception. The book's limited theoretical contribution, its heavy reliance on secondary sources when discussing American political and military involvement in the Great Lakes Region, and the succinctness of the text (net 136 pages) could be interpreted as shortcomings. Interviews with American policy-makers as well as UNHCR senior staff could have enriched the discussion, although reportedly the author attempted in vain to

interview her former colleagues.

Notwithstanding these limitations, *Post-Genocide Rwandan Refugees* makes an unparalleled contribution to the literature by providing alternative views on genocide narratives, durable solutions for refugees, and the conceptualization of genocide itself.

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Book Review

Bahar Banaei

REFERENCE

Nyers, P. (2018). **Irregular Citizenship, Immigration, and Deportation.** Routledge. pp. 172. ISBN (hard cover): 9781138337008

Peter Nyers's compelling *Irregular Citizenship, Immigration, and Deportation* appeals to readers to critically examine citizenship as a fluid concept. He discusses issues that are of increasing concern with the rise of state hostility toward migrants, deportations, and detentions, and the austerity enacted in care for migrants globally. Nyers looks beyond formal definitions of citizenship to understand it as a kinetic "social position" (p.1) that coexists with "irregularity." According to Nyers, the stable citizenship of some depends on the precarious citizenship of others. In addition to groups whose precarious status is more readily understood, such as asylum seekers and migrant workers, Nyers shows how citizens are pushed into irregularity, including through citizenship revocation, deportation, and detention, and how these processes reify state sovereignty.

Nyers's book is structured into six chapters, which contain eleven "acts": stories on irregularity. Through them, Nyers illustrates how irregular citizenship is produced through racialization, externalization, exceptionalism, accidents, and contestation. The irregular citizens Nyers discusses include racialized people and those who do not conform with normative conceptions of citizenship. However, he shifts our focus away from who are the irregular citizens and what they have done and centres his analysis on the discursive and political processes that create irregularity.

In the first chapter, Nyers examines the case of Deepan Budlakoti, who was left stateless when his birthright citizenship was revoked by the Canadian state after he served a three-year prison sentence. Budlakoti's case demonstrates one of Nyers's central arguments: citizenship is not static. Budlakoti's race, the nationality of his parents, and the mishaps made in his citizenship application pushed him into irregularity. Nyers argues that such irregularity benefits the state. The state guards membership in society against irregular citizens, such as those convicted of criminal offences who are

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deemed "unwanted, not-normal, and therefore alarming and potentially dangerous" (p.11).

In chapter 2, Nyers explores how irregularity is created through state "abandonment," which makes an individual's citizenship "unworkable." In act 2, which tells the story of Abousfian Abdelrazik, Nyers highlights the racist and exclusionary practices that became prevalent after 9/11. In 2003, Abdelrazik, a dual citizen, was arrested, detained, and tortured by the Sudanese government at the request of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. He was denied protections he should have been granted as a Canadian citizen and was even prohibited from returning to Canada. The term "Kafkaesque" often describes cases such as Abdelrazik's to illustrate the terrifying moments when rights-bearing individuals are confronted with the legal exceptions that abandon them (p.49). Nyers argues that such "Kafkaesque" practices are necessary to reproduce state sovereignty, because the state's interest in protecting "regular" subjects necessitates the maintenance of legal exceptions through which citizens are abandoned. Nyers also discusses contestation as a method of asserting one's political subjectivity and reclaiming rights denied by the state, and points to the successful solidarity campaigns through which Abdelrazik challenged the abandonment of his citizenship. However, Nyers asks, if "regular" citizenship is more than a formal status and is instead a political, moral, and cultural one that involves affective ties to the nation-state, do contestation and protest become self-irregularization ?

In the third and fourth chapters, Nyers discusses externalization, which occurs when the state offloads its responsibilities or deports people to another state, making it easier to shirk its responsibilities to citizens. In chapter 3, Nyers provides the reader with two "acts," narrating cases of birthright citizenship that the state perceived as "accidental." Despite their legal status as citizens, these individuals were scrutinized for their perceived lack of ties to the state of their birth. Nyers turns to theories of risk to show how accidents are built into birthright citizenship and leave some vulnerable to irregularity, despite their valid citizenship. As opposed to desirable and "essential" citizens, accidental citizens are seen as dangerous, particularly when accused of criminal or national security offences. Externalization of their citizenship through deportation or termination of citizenship are extreme examples of irregularization.

In chapter 4 the concept of externalization is applied to dual citizens. Nyers argues that citizenship is tiered and classed (p. 99) and that dual citizens are often marked as disposable. He uses the case of the 2006 Israeli Invasion of Lebanon to explore this idea (p. 89). Although states were responsible for providing safety to their nationals isolated in Lebanon, they were reluctant to assist dual citizens, who are judged on their perceived worthiness and affective ties to the country against which citizenship rights are asserted. This was also apparent in the popular conception of "Canadians of convenience" (p. 99), which emerged during the 2006 crisis and implied that dual citizens were using citizenship as a form of insurance, without permanently living in the country or paying taxes. Nyers argues that this debate over worthiness opens pathways for people to be pushed into irregularity and have citizenship protections revoked.

The final two chapters of the book discuss methods of contesting citizenship and challenging irregularization. Chapter 5 provides a historical outline of "repatriation from below" (p. 116) with a particular focus

on the collective act of petitioning. Repatriation from below involves grassroots efforts by community members to challenge bureaucratic processes that push people into irregularity, such as deportations and detentions, and demand for irregular citizens' repatriation. These actions challenge the assumption that irregularization only affects irregular subjects and not their wider communities. Rather, irregular citizens are situated in larger networks of people with varying privileges of status and citizenship who may collectively seek to repatriate irregular citizens and reinstate rights that have been forcibly removed.

The final chapter imagines a world beyond border zones through a discussion of "Status for All" and open borders campaigns. Nyers argues against the common critique of no-border theories as hopelessly "utopian" and points to current practices of democratizing borders, such as sanctuary cities. By highlighting processes through which popular movements have sought to protect the rights of irregular citizens, this chapter offers powerful insight for academics and activists thinking about how to mount effective challenges to irregularity.

The conclusion presents the case of Sister Juliana Eligwe, a rejected asylum seeker made member of the Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation in an attempt to prevent her deportation. Although Nyers briefly explores the dynamics between the Canadian state and First Nation communities, the reader is left wondering about the relationship between theories of irregularity and settler-colonialism, particularly since the book's acts take place in settler states like Canada.

Irregular Citizenship, Immigration, and Deportation provides excellent insights into the often oversimplified issue of irregular citizenship and shows how irregularity and citizenship are not mutually exclusive but rather fluid categories. Their volatility reproduces the state's authority and challenges it through political mobilization. This is a must-read text for academics, students, and researchers in the fields of citizenship and migration studies.

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Book Review

René Bogović

REFERENCE
Musoni, F. (2020). **Border Jumping and Migration Control in Southern Africa.** Indiana University Press. pp. 218. ISBN (hard cover): 9780253047151

Bridging historical and migration research, *Border Jumping and Migration Control in Southern Africa* explores unofficial border flows between Zimbabwe and South Africa from 1890 to 2010.

Exceeding a mere analysis of push-and-pull factors driving cross-border flows, this volume situates border jumpers as rational actors who adjust crossing strategies to structural circumstances. They adapt to changing statecraft and migration politics, while questioning the legitimacy of African colonial borders.

The book is organized chronologically. It begins by describing the rise of colonial rule of the Zimbabwe plateau by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and the establishment of Southern Rhodesia in the 1890s. The focus then shifts to changing cross-border flows as Southern Rhodesia evolved into Zimbabwe, and the Transvaal Colony became part of the Union of South Africa, later the Republic of South Africa.

The introduction sets up the definitional framework of the book, contesting customary terminology in migration studies. Border jumping, a local definition of unofficial cross-border flows, is chosen over terms that ignore state structures (i.e., undocumented/unauthorized) and carry pejorative connotations (i.e., illegal) or suggest a disorderly flow (i.e., informal/irregular). Border jumping advances the book's objective of contesting the validity of the border's existence while recognizing jumpers' agency.

Chapter 1 opens with the BSAC's establishment of the Limpopo River as a colonial border, with Southern Rhodesia to the north and the Transvaal to the south. From its inception onwards, the border made customary cross-river movements illegal, severing ethnolinguistic regional units. Colonial rule furthermore disrupted economic systems, as the introduction of wage economy, land dispossessions, and forced relocations pushed native populations to seek labour opportunities south of the Limpopo.

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South African mining interests, led by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, kept the border porous. South Africa skirted enforcement of border checks, ensuring a steady flow of cheap labour southward, despite BSAC's efforts to retain its labour force north of the Limpopo. The border was both the stage of colonial powers vying for labour and a site of subaltern resistance, with locals continuing to cross the border in defiance of its legitimacy.

Chapter 2 opens with the legislative changes ensuing the merging of several colonies south of the Limpopo into the Union of South Africa in 1910. South Africa implemented a sweeping ban on immigrants from north of the 22nd parallel (roughly corresponding to the Limpopo) ostensibly to reduce ill-health in tropical workers unsuited to South Africa's cooler climate. As the ban's implicit rationale was to contain South Asian immigration, the flow of cheap labour from north of the Limpopo remained unchanged. However, making Limpopo crossings illegal exposed migrants to rising violence and exploitation, leading to the emergence of officials' corruption and human smugglers.

Chapter 3 follows the aftermath of the ban's lifting in 1933, as South Africa needed foreign labour at the end of the Great Depression. Migrant flows, formal and informal, continued, encouraged by South African businesses, as the National Party, architect of apartheid, came into power in 1948. Return labourers supported the efforts of human smugglers and informal recruiters to bring more labour to South Africa. These activities grew increasingly violent and devolved into kidnappings and farm raids to add labourers. The activities in the Limpopo Valley came to resemble aspects of the transatlantic slave trade.

Chapter 4 starts with the implementation of apartheid in the 1950s. Forced relocations to overcrowded and resource poor "native reserves" (Bantustans) meant millions of black South Africans lost prime land and access to informal trade in urban areas. Apartheid led to skyrocketing Black unemployment, encouraging South African businesses to shift to local labour while restricting foreign workers. The proliferation of Black liberation movements in the 1960s, including the victory of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army, a Black liberation movement opposing apartheid, prompted the South African government to militarize the Limpopo border and install an electrified fence in 1985. By 1989 hundreds of border jumpers died at the fence.

Chapter 5 details the collapse of the formal economy in Zimbabwe and the intensification of cross-border trade and work across the Limpopo as South Africa transitioned to democracy in 1994. Despite the end of apartheid, South Africa continued to protect its local labour force and borders. By 2009, most migrants continued to use unofficial channels to cross the Limpopo. Human smugglers and corrupt state officials remained the biggest risk to migrants, especially women, often victims of rape and gender-based violence.

The conclusion reiterates that, much like events at the Berlin and Mexico-US walls, the Limpopo shows that border fortification does not inhibit flows and instead makes them more dangerous, encouraging human smugglers and corruption. Colonial borders feed border jumping, and border jumping will not cease as long as the nation-state system persists.

The book offers a comprehensive review of local border dynamics rarely explored by academics in the Global North. Rich detail is the book's strength but also its shortcoming. It highlights the interdependent role of labour market interests, the agency

of border jumpers, and the legacy of colonial statecraft in the changing attributes of the Limpopo border. Yet these theoretical contributions are diluted with the minute detail of successive legislative changes and personal accounts encountered at the border. While individual stories provide much-needed humanity to otherwise impersonal descriptions of migrant flows, the information overload and fragmentation muddles the theoretical contribution of the book.

Some phenomena do not receive the attention warranted by their influence on border dynamics. For instance, the contribution of border securitization to a surge in violence against women deserves its own chapter. The claim about the unique nature of African borders, legacy of the colonial scramble for Africa, is insufficiently explored. State borders that ignore economic and cultural regional continuities exist within and outside the post-colonial world—borders in the Balkans being a case in point. Exploring the unique significance of the Limpopo border would highlight the relevance of the book among anti-colonial works.

Recommendations for future policy, as well as activist and community work are also lacking. Other than advocating for the removal of colonial borders, there are no systematic suggestions that would help policy-makers, activists, or border jumpers work towards a safer, fairer, and sustainable approach to crossing the Limpopo.

Despite missed opportunities for greater theoretical impact, *Border Jumping and Migration Control in Southern Africa* adds a strong voice from the Global South. It provides migration studies with the opportunity to break away from its narrow focus on the Global North, broadening the range of cases available in theorizing and labelling cross-border phenomena. I am enthusiastic about including it in my migration studies syllabi.

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Book Review

Robert L. Larruina

REFERENCE

Trix, F. (2018). ***Europe and the Refugee Crisis: Local Responses to Migrants.*** Bloomsbury. pp. 266. ISBN (hard cover): 9780755617753

What many have called "the European refugee crisis" or "the asylum system crisis" has revealed the fragility of the current refugee reception system in Europe. During 2015 and 2016, regional, national, and local authorities in Europe struggled to cope with the high numbers of refugees crossing their territories or arriving to request asylum. At the same time, civil society organizations, volunteer groups, and engaged citizens displayed the flexibility to act quickly and locally in assisting refugees. With her attention to individual stories, Frances Trix brings a much-needed anthropological perspective to observe, feel, and understand the spaces and opportunities for encounters between refugees and citizens in the countries of transit and destination. Her book brings a human perspective to the refugee crisis in Europe. However, understanding the crisis at an individual level necessarily entails embracing Trix's narrative process: "Notice that fieldwork has a narrative quality. Therefore, reading it, just as engaging in it, requires a different rhythm. The purpose will often become clearer at the end, not at the beginning, of a passage" (p. 7). Trix describes the perceptions, actions, challenges, and opportunities that the regular, yet exceptional, men and women assisting refugees encounter. Following the same journey refugees took, she immerses herself in diverse contexts to offer a critical view of the different forms of refugees' reception. Her fieldwork starts during the winter of 2015 in Macedonia, a vital stop on the Balkan migrant trail between Greece and Serbia, and the ultimate crossing point for refugees to reach Western Europe. In the spring of 2016, Trix travels throughout Germany to witness local social initiatives and submerge herself in refugee reception centres, mosques, and churches.

Europe and the Refugee Crisis provides accounts from local leaders and citizens who had the potential to influence others' attitudes toward refugees, as in small towns where these individuals could have had a strong

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impact because of the tight-knit community. By asking simple yet poignant questions about how these influencers came to work with refugees, what they thought about the refugee situation, and what their general perceptions were, Frances Trix explores the qualms, uncertainties, and problems they faced. She shows great sensitivity in recounting the vivid accounts of the situations and people she encounters: readers can feel the cold outside the tents, the warmth of the food provided, and the stridency of languages and dialects inside and outside the places she visited. Trix accomplishes this while negotiating and adapting to her contextual circumstances.

Europe and the Refugee Crisis invites readers on a physical, mental, and emotional journey. In chapter 1, Trix elaborates on the influences upon people's attitudes toward refugees in Europe. She focuses on "those who did not leave their homes; the Europeans who received the refugees" (p.7). The chapter also examines how German Chancellor Angela Merkel, as the national leader with the most favourable view of refugees, and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, as the leader most opposed to refugees, affected people's attitudes during the 2015 crisis. Trix studies Merkel's and Orban's views through her analysis of political discourses and political actions that took place during 2015 and 2016. The chapter also details how earlier refugees were treated in Europe and how that attitude worsened as the 20th century progressed. After WWI, Germany and France welcomed many refugees from Russia. However, Europe did not favour Jewish refugees who escaped Germany in the 1930s and those who fled the Balkan Wars in the 1990s. By the beginning of the 21st century, Germany's attitude towards refugees had become more positive, while hostility increased in the rest of Europe. Chapter 2 presents the refugee crossings through Macedonia along the Balkan migrant trail, discussing the government's responses and the actions of NGOs and engaged individuals. Chapter 3 then examines refugee transit camps in Macedonia during the winter of 2015–2016, where Trix helped by interpreting and translating. She explores the experiences of volunteers who tried to ameliorate refugees' conditions by serving warm food, providing clothing, or playing with children.

Chapter 4 describes how people in three small German villages (Elzach and two unnamed locations near Freiburg) responded to the new refugees and shows the importance of volunteer initiatives. The responses in several small German towns and cities (Bruchsal, Bamberg, Nürnberg, and Schwäbisch Gmünd) are described in chapter 5, while chapter 6 takes an in-depth look at refugee programs in large German cities (Munich, Cologne, and Hamburg). The multilayered and multi-level integration issues in Germany are elaborated in chapter 7, which provides a detailed description of the successful experiences and specific challenges faced by refugees arriving in 2015–2016 and the German policies to promote integration. This chapter also discusses significant integration issues, such as urban planning, social cohesion, and access to education and the labour market, concluding with a reflection on security issues such as crime, terrorism, and attacks on refugees. Trix also suggests directions for future research.

While crises in the refugee system continue and discourses about the importance of nation-states and borders gain ground, *Europe and the Refugee Crisis* provides a great resource for researchers and service providers in governmental and non-profit migrant organizations. It is also an essential work for citizens taking action to lessen refugee exclusion. *Europe and the Refugee Crisis* brings a criti-

cal yet compassionate perspective to refugee reception in Europe that is easily translatable to other critical contexts. Trix shows the human dynamics of the European migrant crisis and provides readers with stories of hope from small and meaningful actions. These actions are far from the geopolitical debates and deterrent politics yet close to the small but significant human exchanges that offer optimism in times of almost total impossibility.

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FILM REVIEW

Serdar Kaya

FILM
Al-Kateab, W. and Watts, E. (Directors) (2019). **For Sama** [Film]. PBS Frontline. Channel 4 News. ITN Productions. (96 minutes)

What happens when a peaceful city turns into a war zone? What do people do when bombs start falling? Do they stay put, or do they flee to safety? At what point does the decision to stay become so dangerous that all but a minority of residents choose to leave?

The literature on displacement has focused on these questions and similar others for decades. Yet, one can argue, the ordeals of civilians in war zones remain largely a mystery to us, as they are difficult for outsiders to relate to, let alone comprehend fully. Documentaries help to overcome this challenge. *For Sama*, in particular, is a must-see for migration scholars, as it captures the extent of the horrors ordinary people witness before they become refugees or internally displaced persons.

The documentary is a first-hand account of the Syrian civil war, as recorded by Waad Al-Kateab (pseudo family name), who was a senior student majoring in economics at the University of Aleppo at the time the conflict began in 2011. Waad used semi-professional equipment to record the events around her as they happened. She captured the changes in her neighbourhood from the early days of the uprising to the capture of the city by the regime forces in 2016. Her vast video footage was later cut by co-director Edward Watts, a filmmaker known primarily for his 2015 documentary entitled *Escape from ISIS*.

Some of the content that made it to Watt's final 96-minute cut is hard to dismiss. It is war unfiltered. Bombs fall. People carry wounded children to the makeshift hospital in the neighbourhood. There are no stretchers, so wounded adults are dragged through the corridors to the operating room. Everyone is fully alert. Everyone is racing against time. Perhaps everyone is doing more or less what helpless people do in wars when they are under attack.

Of all these nerve-racking scenes, two are arguably the hardest to forget. One is the emergency C-section scene where the baby has no pulse, while the wounded mother is still unconscious. The doctors start resuscita-

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tion immediately. After some very long seconds of CPR, the baby starts breathing, much to everyone's relief. The other is the Queiq massacre scene, where local people find bodies in the river and start hauling them out of the water. They lay them out in rows in a public square for identification. The victims were local merchants and not even fighters. Yet, for some reason, the regime forces bound their wrists behind their backs and tortured them before shooting them in the head and dumping them in the river.

The documentary captures such extraordinary occurrences successfully, but it does not limit itself to the brutality of war. To the contrary, Waad's personal story is intertwined with the ongoing tragedies. Waad's life changes dramatically during the years she records the events in Aleppo. She falls in love with and eventually gets married to Hamza, a doctor who tries to help the wounded the best he can with the little equipment he has. The couple's priorities start to change when Waad becomes pregnant with their daughter Sama, whom the documentary is named after. Waad cannot be sure if they can protect a baby in a war zone, so she keeps re-evaluating their decision to stay.

Most people in the neighbourhood make similar risk assessments continuously, and no one can really know who will still be in Aleppo next week or who will still be alive. Yet life goes on even in the unlikeliest of places. People attend wedding parties. They cheer up and dance. As modest as the party may be, people still find ways to forget about everything and just be human again for a while.

For Sama has captured life as is, without the cameraperson herself even knowing what will happen next. This spontaneity is probably the most outstanding quality of the production. From one scene to the next, viewers witness life in war-torn Aleppo with all the brutality that people have long normalized. It is almost as if viewers experience developments as they happen, alongside those in the recording. For example, in one scene, viewers learn that another family has fled. Those in the recording have also just learned the news. They are thus quietly processing the information. Most viewers probably find themselves doing the same. No one really knows where that family is right now, or whether they will be all right. Nor does anyone know whether staying or fleeing is the right thing to do. Then someone breaks the silence by pointing at a boy nearby who is sad because his best friend is gone. This is the way *For Sama* tells its story.

Ever since its premiere at the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, in March 2019, *For Sama* has gained critical acclaim. After being shown in many festivals around the world and winning many awards, it was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature, and it won the International Emmy Award for Best Documentary. Readers of *Refuge* will find it informative and enlightening.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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