
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Rupaleem Bhuyan is a Professor in Social Work at the University of Toronto where she teaches community practice, social action, and qualitative research methods. She brings over 20 years of experience working with migrant communities who are organizing for rights, safety, and belonging. Her scholarship examines structural inequities produced through immigration policies and how social and health service providers can better support immigrants who have a precarious immigration status in Canada. As an educator and researcher, she is deeply committed to feminist, anti-racist, decolonial approaches to transforming systems that perpetuate inequality and discrimination, while promoting justice and equality for all.

Sonia Ben Soltane holds a PhD in Social Work from the McGill University and has a background in theory of law and urban policy. In her work, she develops a socio-cultural analysis of migration laws and policies. In her analysis, she looks at the social contexts in which migration policies are debated in the public space, as well as how these policies influence the lives of immigrant people. Within this general framework, she examines the integration pathways of racialised immigrant women, the experiences of settlement workers from an immigrant background, and aging immigrants in Canada. In her work, she develops a postcolonial stance that enables her to grasp the coloniality of Canadian and French migration policies, and to bring postcolonial perspectives from Francophone and Anglophone academia into dialogue.

Lindsay Larios has a PhD in Political Science from the Concordia University, funded by a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship, and eight years in community-engaged policy research. She joined the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba as an Assistant Professor in 2021. As an interdisciplinary critical policy scholar, her research focuses on questions related to citizenship, justice, and human rights by applying a reproductive justice framework to the Canadian immigration context. Her most recent work focuses on the politics of pregnancy and childbirth and precarious migration as an issue of reproductive justice and forms the basis of a book manuscript under contract with University of Toronto Press.

1 Introduction

This special issue brings together interdisciplinary scholars working in different regions of the world to theorise how the colonial legacy of national borders shape everyday struggles for belonging, status, identity, dignity, and rights for migrants and minoritised populations. Western colonial ideologies, which underpin contemporary border regimes, have long dictated the rights and exclusions faced by individuals who are categorised as Indigenous, settler, and/or migrant through their legal relationship to the nation state and its claimed territories (Sharma, 2020).

The enduring legacies of colonial violence, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and environmental degradation contribute to the ethnic cleansing and forced migration in regions around the world (Grosfoguel, 2004; Grosfoguel et al., 2015), with over 100 million people who are internally displaced, with an estimated 300 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2024 in regions that include the Palestinian Occupied Territories, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine, Syria, Venezuela, Columbia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, and Myanmar (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2023; International Rescue Committee, 2023).

Drawing from previous scholarship on bordering as an everyday practice (Moffette, 2018; Villegas, 2020; Walsh et al., 2022; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018), this collection of papers aims to further elucidate how legacies of coloniality shape and configure the symbolic, legal, and structural forms of violence migrants and minoritised communities negotiate in countries where they live, work, and build their lives. While the articles in this issue focus on legal, bureaucratic, and structural forms of violence associated with everyday bordering, we concluded the writing of this special issue during Israel's brutal military campaign against displaced Palestinians in Gaza, which Francesca Albanese, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, has called a genocide. The atrocities in Gaza, and similar forms of genocidal violence and ethnic cleansing around the world, illustrate the enduring legacies of coloniality (Grosfoguel, 2004; Grosfoguel et al., 2015).

Amidst the ongoing suffering and violence in Occupied Palestinian Territories, anti-colonial organising and global solidarity offers some critical hope. As Wahab (2023) reminds us, "because we are all deeply entangled in the oppressive systems that shape our lives, imagining and dreaming different futures is vital to creating new structures and possibilities." This hope is not naive; it acknowledges the entrenched systems of oppression and the formidable obstacles ahead. Yet, it persists, fuelled by the indomitable spirit of those who refuse to accept injustice as inevitable. It is a hope that inspires

continued resistance, solidarity, and the unwavering pursuit of a future where liberation and dignity are afforded to all.

With contributions from interdisciplinary scholar activists working in Canada, France, Spain, Morocco, and India, this special issue captures conceptual, empirical, and illustrative case examples of symbolic, structural, gendered, and racialised dimensions of bordering, belonging, and resistance to exclusion and dehumanisation. By centring the experiences of marginalised communities, this collection highlights migrants' agency to challenge inequities but also imagine and work towards transformation. Moreover, the topics explored in this special issue transcend geographical boundaries to speak to shared systemic challenges migrants face under global capitalism and border regimes, while theorising from specific historical and contemporary sites of bordering that produce intersecting oppression and creative forms of resistance in India, France, Spain, and Canada.

In what follows, we first provide some context for how this collection came together and what informed our shared interests in examining bordering practices through feminist intersectional and de-colonial frameworks. We then explore theoretical frames that guide our attention to

- a the symbolic and structural forms of violence associated with the colonality of bordering and belonging in different national contexts
- b forms of contemporary border governance and the negotiation of citizenship boundaries
- c how gender, race, class, and other axes of social difference intersect to produce and maintain hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion
- d resistance practices and strategies employed by migrants and advocates to challenge exclusionary border regimes and envision more just and inclusive forms of belonging.

By examining key themes across this collection of papers, we invite deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play in migration contexts towards informing ongoing efforts to address and work towards eradicating the structural inequalities embedded within bordering practices.

2 How the collection came together

As part of the Building Migrant Resilience in Cities Partnership – *Immigration et Résilience en Milieu Urbain* (BMRC-IRMU), our collaborative journey began in winter of 2020 when Rupaleem Bhuyan and Jill Hanley proposed forming a working group to examine migrants' transitions in legal immigration status. This group included academic and community-based scholars specialising in social work, public policy, law, immigration settlement, and gender-based violence prevention. Members included Rupaleem Bhuyan, Jill Hanley, Sonia Ben Soltane, Lindsay Larios, Delphine Nakache, Cathy Schmidt, Heather Bergen, Oula Hajjer and Margarita Perez. The purpose of the working group was to explore how to effectively utilise previously collected data from previous studies with migrants who have a temporary immigration status, to deepen our

collective understanding of the social conditions and political forces shaping migrant trajectories in Canada.

Though not the focus of our work, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated pandemics of racial and gendered violence, deeply impacted our relationships with each other and this work. In the first months of COVID-19 lockdowns, our monthly virtual gatherings generated a space for connection, as we reflected upon our exhaustion, fears, and rage at the amplification of systemic inequities, including (but not limited to) the hyper-productivity culture pervasive within neoliberal universities. Inspired by the ethos of feminist praxis and slow scholarship (Mountz et al., 2015), we set out to develop a shared understanding of the shifts in immigration status we have witnessed in research and community work with migrants residing in Canada.

Following the development of 'bordering' scholarship in Canada, Western Europe, and the USA, we considered the dynamic assemblage of everyday interactions migrants have with state bureaucracies in relation to their legal status, embodied gendered and racialised subjectivities, and informal networks. Attending to the systemic racism and structural violence (re)produced through contemporary bureaucracies led us to consider links to ongoing colonial ideologies, histories, and practices. As many in our group are also first- and second-generation immigrants, our personal networks and relationships compelled us to consider sites of bordering within the settler colonial context of Canada, where our working group was situated, the places from which the migrants we work with originated, and the places we and our loved ones call 'home' from our own personal and family migration trajectories.

Previous scholars have documented the expanding roles of state and non-state actors, in producing and maintaining nation-state boundaries through a wide range of public agencies, private enterprise, and bureaucratic practices (for example, Abji and Larios, 2021; Alpes and Spire, 2014; Heckert, 2020). Operating through the guise of the rule of law, nation-state bureaucracies across the world individualise legal relationships, identity, and rights within the state, through the administration of legal codes, participation in the labour market, social-cultural practices, and even participation in regional and national elections (Bosniak, 2000; Coutin, 2000; Goldring and Landolt, 2021; Larios et al., 2020; Moffette, 2015; Sadiq, 2005). The affective power of national identity responsabilises populations to participate in bureaucratic practices (Ahmed, 2007, 2010). These processes regulate the population "even in instances in which the actors involved do not conceive of a state presence" [Sheehan, (2018), p.153; see also Wemyss et al., 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018]. As Sheehan (2018, p.152) has observed, "situated in the interstices of these multiple bureaucratic articulations is fertile ground for the flourishing of structural violence."

Considering emerging contributions of anti-colonial scholars working across geographic and disciplinary lines, we recruited critical migration scholars working both in and across the Global North and Global South, towards understanding the transnational dimensions of bordering practices and regimes. Several members of this collection also took part in a roundtable and two related panels at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Law and Society Association, whose hybrid format allowed broad participation and dialogue among scholars and community partners in North America and Europe. With gracious support from Sasha Bagley, as editor for IJBMS, we worked closely with authors to complete this issue during the turbulent and disruptive years during and immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic. We also acknowledge the additional editorial labour taken on by Sonia Ben Soltane, whose commitment to showcasing the scholarship of

Francophone North African scholars, ensured their work traversed the often invisible epistemic and linguistic borders within scholarly practice.

3 Theorising the legal and bureaucratic violence associated bordering practices

The first paper by Larios, Bhuyan, Schmidt and Bergen serves as a critical entry point, introducing a conceptual framework that examines the institutionalisation of state-centric immigration categories within Canadian society. Building upon Goldring and Landholt's (2022) discussion of non-citizen assemblage and Scott's (2020) conceptualisation of state legibility in the neoliberal era, Larios et al. (2024) theorise the intricate negotiations non-citizens must undertake to achieve and maintain legal recognition in Canada's immigration landscape, but also across multiple bureaucracies that shape migrants' experiences with institutions that govern education, health care, employment, criminal justice, and child welfare protection. Bordering practices within Canada's immigration system, furthermore, are reproduced across social intuitions including health care, education, and the child welfare system.

In the case of Iranian migrants, who make up 13% of the international graduate students in Quebec, Canada, Razavipour considers how discrimination against Iranian students, who are profiled as potential security threats, contributes to delays in obtaining or renewing study permits due to the heightened security screenings for Iranians. Considering the impact of heightened security screenings on Iranian students' mobility – for example, when a doctoral student who has studied in Canada for three years was unable to visit a dying parent or attend their funeral – Razivipour argues these extended administrative processes violate their human dignity, honour, self-esteem, and human rights. Furthermore, in Mucina and Lash-Ballew's in-depth analysis of narratives of former non-citizen youth who were taken into state custody through Canada's child protection system, they argue that the confluence of anti-immigrant discourses, systemic racism, class ideology, and gender norms intersect to reframe Black and Arab non-citizen youth, who were previously recognised by the state as 'at risk' of child abuse, to 'criminal threats' who pose a risk to the nation. The case of crimmigration through the child welfare, to criminal justice, to deportation pipeline for non-citizen former youth in care is a telling reminder of how bordering logics supersede any pretence of the nation's 'moral' obligation to protect children's rights, when the children are deemed as outside the imagined nation.

Bhuyan, Sarma, Azad and Bordoloi extend the conversation to India's northeastern state of Assam, shedding light on the legal and administrative procedures affecting an estimated 1.9 million residents excluded from the 2019 National Registry of Citizens. Through a feminist bordering lens, they dissect the convergence of Hindu nationalism and Assamese ethnonationalism, which has contributed to a citizenship crisis for resource-poor women, children, and trans people of varying ethnic and religious backgrounds, who are at risk of *de facto* statelessness as illegible state subjects. The authors emphasise the gendered and racialised dimensions of the crisis in citizenship, where bureaucratic processes to determine state legibility as a citizen reinforce long-standing racial, class, and heteropatriarchal inequities.

While the geo-political histories of colonial immigration bureaucracies and institutions that govern through child welfare and citizenship systems vary across national contexts, these papers contribute to a transnational conversation on the colonial legacies that inform the safeguarding of the rights of those deemed unworthy, within often intricate and dynamic webs. The narratives of non-citizen migrants transcend geographical boundaries and, furthermore, compel us to attend to the intersectionality of bordering practices, with an emphasis on the profound consequences for those who are deemed ‘illegible’ in existing state bureaucracies; especially when the legal and bureaucratic violences they encounter remain largely out of sight.

4 Gendered and racialised logics of exclusion underpinning bordering practices

The contours of coloniality and the borders it produces and maintains have long been intertwined with assumptions that characterise one’s role and membership within the nation as informed by gender, race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, class, and their various intersections. In particular, women have been positioned as ‘reproducers’ of both the nation and of otherness, and therefore their sexuality and agency in forming families has long been a key focus of state-oversight (for example Abu-Laban and Nath, 2007; Bhuyan et al., 2018; Wemyss et al., 2018). Furthermore, in varying contexts gendered assumptions of experiences of vulnerability (for example, as strong and persevering or as compliant and passive) have further characterised the circumstances of migrant inclusion in the labour market and host society as a whole. Inseparable from this dynamic are processes of racialisation – both in regard to national membership and the capitalist project (Sharma, 2020; Walia, 2021). Articles in this collection highlight both the direct and more subtle ways that the gendered and racialised logics of colonialism manifest in the everyday practices of bordering.

Hanley, Goswami and Sanchez highlight the ways in which bordering practices produce and maintain racialised gender dynamics that rely on traditional logics of masculinity that render invisible the vulnerability and care needs of migrant men in temporary labour migration programs. Drawing on two case studies of Guatemalan agricultural workers living in Canada, Hanley et al.’s article underscores the ways in which immigration rules around family separation enact borders between family members in need of care and family members that would typically provide that care, while also bordering access to public social care supports in their host country.

Speaking to temporary labour migration between Morocco and Spain, Arab and Azaitraoui also pick up on the racialised and gendered dynamics of migrant labour. Although frequently framed as docile, the racialised women workers in Arab and Azaitraoui’s study actively resist bordering practices that position them as exploitable, while also managing new forms of gendered retaliation both in Morocco and in Spain as a result. Moujoud’s article similarly critiques femonationalist public discourses that reproduce gendered and racialised stereotypes of Muslim migrant women in France as in need of rescuing from the men in their community (e.g., from being forced to wear a veil, to marry, or into prostitution). Moujoud also documents how Muslim women challenge these stereotypes in public and legislative discourse.

The logics of gender and race that shape borders also emerge in more subtle ways. For example, Bhuyan et al.’s contribution points to the hetero- and cis-normative

assumptions of gender identity assigned at birth and the patriarchal social norms that erect both direct and discreet barriers within the bureaucratic processes of establishing one's identity and claiming citizenship in India. Similarly, the logics of race are expressed in often invisible bureaucratic and social processes, as analysed in Razavipour's account of international students from Iran studying in Canada. While not explicit in the international student migration system in Canada, Iranian international students nonetheless feel the impact of heightened securitisation and economic discourses as an affront to human dignity.

Although these contexts vary, the logics of exclusion embedded within bordering practices continue to align with colonial priorities. The work represented in this collection speaks to the disproportionately experienced harms and impacts on racialised migrants, women, and gender diverse people. These convergences exemplify the persistent coloniality of formerly colonised immigrant subjects.

5 Migrant resistance to everyday bordering

Although the exclusionary and dehumanising effects of bordering practices cannot be overstated, several papers in this collection cast light on the nuanced and multifaceted resistance strategies employed by migrants to confront and navigate the oppressive structures of bordering within immigration regimes, the child welfare system, the justice system, and feminist social movements. These resistance strategies include individual acts of coping, survival, and case advocacy, as well as acts of defiance and direct action.

Both Kaur Mucina and Lash-Ballew and Hanley et al. (2024) provide detailed examples of individual case advocacy among migrants in Canada. Kaur Mucina and Lash-Ballew draw upon narratives of former youth in care whose "resistance against and refusal to succumb to oppressive powers" shows up when fighting to reunify with children who were removed by the child welfare system, finding community after being incarcerated as a criminalised youth, or claiming belonging as 'Canadian' despite being issued a deportation warrant as a 'criminally inadmissible' immigrant. Hanley et al. (2024) similarly capture intimate details of everyday resistance through acts of care and solidarity, among migrant men, who are injured on the job, while working under Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. While some migrants are successful in their fight for workers' compensation (to which they are entitled), medical care, or even gaining permanent residence using existing legal frameworks, Hanley et al. (2024) also highlight the risks and consequences that accompany individual and collective organising. While migrant worker organisations offer significant logistic support (i.e., assisting with transportation to and from health and legal appointments) and create spaces for collective action, Hanley et al. (2024) emphasise the often-invisible dimensions of emotional and caring migrant men offer each other, through mutual aid, support, and friendship.

Moujoud's and Arab and Azaitraoui's articles speak to this resistance in the European context. Resistance among Moroccan migrant women working in Spain's strawberry fields is shaped by the intersecting structural violence the women face, in their home countries as women from resource-poor regions operating between intergovernmental agreements between two countries, that rely on their disposable migrant labour to build wealth for elites in both Spain and Morocco. In this context, Arab and Azaitraoui found

that some women who experience sexual abuse from their employers elect to remain silent as a survival strategy to protect themselves from retribution and maintain the essential income they remit to their children and families back home. When migrant women decided to take risks by charging their employers in Spain's legal justice system, Arab and Azaitraoui consider the bordering practices they encountered when Spanish feminists at first denounced, and were later slow to acknowledge, the intersectional oppressions faced by migrant women as a 'feminist' and Spanish concern. Nevertheless, Arab and Azaitraoui's research captures the courageous resistance of migrant women who collectively challenge sexual exploitation, exclusion from feminist movements, and the right to dignity and belonging through solidarity and intersectional organising. Moujoud's work situates 20 years of collective organising and resistance against femonationalist political discourses and laws in France. Her meticulous presentation of immigrant resistance to discriminatory and sexist policies and bordering practices underlines the discrepancy between the figure of the immigrant woman dispossessed of all agency and capacity for action, and that of activists from below resisting practices of exclusion and discrimination.

6 Conclusions

This collection of papers delves deeply into bureaucracy as a pivotal apparatus of the nation-state in the post-colonial era, enriching our understanding of the legal and administrative exclusions that perpetuate precarity and illegality among those the state categorises as migrants, excludable minorities, and Indigenous 'others'.

By linking contemporary bordering practices to historic and ongoing colonial, racial, capitalist, and patriarchal constructions of social difference, these authors counter the myths of equality, tolerance, and human rights evoked by many nations through state laws and official discourses. Examining epistemic and structural violence that stems from everyday bordering, furthermore, gives meaning to situations that otherwise appear as cases of unpredictability and absurdity (Guarnizo, 2012). We read this absurdity as the veil by which the coloniality of bordering and belonging (Grosfoguel, 2004; Rodriguez, 2018) operates both towards racialised immigrant, as well as native communities positioned as 'permanent native underclass' (Mamdani, 2020).

Through an intersectional and decolonial lens, Larios et al.'s intersectional analysis of non-citizenship assemblage through state legibility, invites us to theorise beyond Eurocentric constructions of political economy, to consider how epistemic, cultural, and embodied forms of belonging and exclusion have always been intertwined (Grosfoguel, 2008; Ben Soltane et al., 2018). As Arab and Azaitraoui and Moujoud, and Bhuyan et al. illustrate, ethnonationalist and feminationist discourses play a crucial role in reinforcing xenophobic, racist, and heteropatriarchal agendas, further complicating the landscape of contemporary migration. While Kaur Mucina and Lash-Ballew, Hanley et al., Moujoud and Razavipour draw our attention to forms of policing, banning, and criminalising migrants' health, parenting, clothing, mobility, and ultimately their legibility as rights bearing people. Although contemporary bordering practices continue to reproduce alarming forms of structural violence, dehumanisation, and suffering, each paper in this collection of papers also document myriad forms of resistance, resilience and agency among migrants and minoritised groups seeking community, care, justice and belonging.

Importantly, the research presented in this special issue has significant policy and practice implications for educators, social and health workers, legal professionals, and policymakers. By documenting the lived experiences of migrants and highlighting the systemic barriers they face, it provides valuable insights for social workers working with immigrant and refugee populations. Additionally, the findings of this research can inform the development of more inclusive and equitable migration policies at local, national, and international levels.

By providing theoretical insights, empirical findings, and critical analyses, we hope readers have a deeper understanding of the colonial legacies that shape contemporary border regimes. We also hope to spark curiosity for readers to further explore and address the everyday challenges of bordering and belonging in today's societies. While the scholarship in this collection holds transformative potential, we acknowledge the need to centre the voices and leadership of those directly affected by bordering and coloniality in future research and mobilisation, to inform policies and practices aimed at fostering more just and inclusive societies.

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