



# “WHY CARE NOW?” IN FORCED MIGRATION RESEARCH

The transformation potential of a radical feminist  
ethics of care

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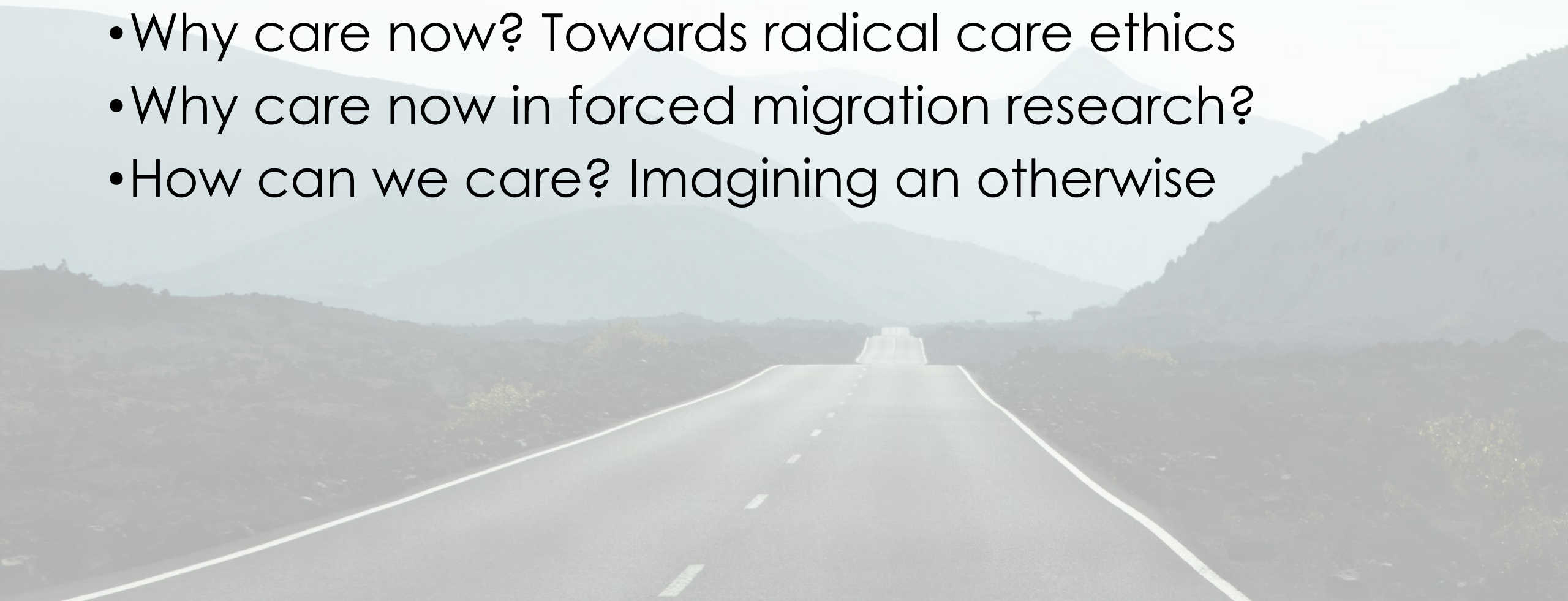
Anonymous peer reviewers

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I live & work on unceded &  
unsurrendered Algonquin territory



# ROADMAP

- Why care now? Towards radical care ethics
  - Why care now in forced migration research?
  - How can we care? Imagining an otherwise
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# “WHY CARE NOW?”

Victoria Lawson, 2007 Presidential address, Association of American Geographers







# RADICAL CARE ETHICS

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“Theorized as an affective connective tissue between an inner self and an outer world, care constitutes a feeling with, rather than a feeling for, others.”  
Hobart and Kneese (2020: 1)

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Response to critiques of  
“carewashing” (Chatzidakis et al. 2020) and Eurocentric and neoliberal perspectives (Tong 1998; Held 2006)

# RELATIONAL

- *Care*-fully consider our positionality within power asymmetries and privilege
- Relationships are interdependent, even in contexts of unequal power relations
  - Researchers *need* research participants; participants rely on allyship & long-term investment
- Building on concept of reciprocity in Indigenous ethics and epistemology

# PREVENTING HARM

critical epistemologies  
acknowledge power relations in  
the (re)production of knowledge

- explicitly and intentionally seek to dismantle harmful power structures as part of research design

(self-)care mechanisms and  
processes within research  
process itself

- differential impact of research on participants, peer researchers, interpreters and contract researchers (often mislabelled as “research assistants”)



# PRODUCTIVE WORK OF EMOTIONS

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validates “gut feelings” and encourages researchers to explore why they react and *care* about certain issues and events

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acknowledges the emotional labour required in research processes

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“When mobilized, it offers visceral, material, and emotional heft to acts of preservation that span a breadth of localities: selves, communities, and social worlds.” (Hobart and Kneese 2020, 1)



# WHY CARE NOW IN FORCED MIGRATION STUDIES?



# ETHICAL TURN IN MIGRATION STUDIES

- Since early 2000s, increased literature on ethics in migration
- CCR, CARFMS & CRS, Ethical guidelines (2017) – French & English
- IASFM Code of Ethics 2018
- codified emerging best practices on migration research and:
  - voluntary, informed consent (Hugman, Bartolomei, and Pittaway 2011);
  - confidentiality (Kahn and Fábos 2017); and
  - “do no harm” (Mackenzie, McDowell, and Pittaway 2007; Hugman, Pittaway, and Bartolomei 2011; Stierl 2020)



# PRECARIOUS MIGRATION STATUS

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Research can lead authorities to identify people who do not have formal status or documentation

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Researchers can exacerbate vulnerability and surveillance for those with precarious status

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Revocation of status, including citizenship, based on research findings

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Most research participants are deportable; researchers usually are not



## CRIMINALIZATION OF MIGRATION

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Externalization policies make it difficult for people to enter legally to exercise their right of asylum

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In some jurisdictions and in some professions, duty to report (self-)harm

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Implications for privacy, confidentiality and informed consent

# SECURITIZATION

- Wide-ranging “anti-terrorist” laws and national security legislation (Guild 2003; Huysmans and Buonfino 2008; Savun and Gineest 2019)
  - People in migration face heightened surveillance and scrutiny
- Online data collection crosses jurisdictions & poses privacy issues



## POLITICIZATION

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Cooperation into policy-based evidence-making (Stierl 2020; Clark-Kazak 2022; Baldwin-Edwards, Blitz, and Crawley 2019)

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Over-researching can lead to research fatigue (Pascucci 2017; Omata 2019), especially when people are “captive audiences”

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Research findings are scrutinized & taken out of context “in shadow of fear” (Bose 2020)



EXTREME  
POWER  
INEQUALITIES

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Dependence on  
government, NGOs &  
sponsors for legal status,  
services and livelihoods


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Calls into question  
voluntariness of consent

# HOW CAN WE CARE?

Imagining an "otherwise" (Povinelli 2012)






*“That kind of parasitic relationship is that researchers are—I feel that researchers, they come get our data, then waste our time. There is no mutual benefit, the benefit is on one side. Those guys collect the data, and for us at the end of it we don’t see any change. We expect to at least get some benefit back, but there is no benefit. You get your data, you go—maybe use it for your own benefit and you leave us hanging. So, I feel only one party is benefitting and the other one is not benefitting. So that’s why I say it’s kind of a parasitic relationship” (quoted in Bilotta 2019, 134)*

# RELATIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE

- “A care ethics approach to research design also asks us to take seriously the ways in which our work is “*for others*” and to build connection and responsibility as key values in our research approaches.” Lawson (2008: 6)
- “response-ability” (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015)
- Whose agenda?
- Greater use of participatory action methodologies and epistemologies
- “Nothing about us without us” – representation and ownership






*“We think that researchers take pride in our increasing problems in order to research more. ...We are still facing the same problems despite the number of researchers we have met.” (cited in Karooma 2019, 18)*

# PROACTIVE CARING – BEYOND DO NO HARM

- Invited allyship to amplify the experiences and priorities of those most affected by forced migration
- Speak out against injustice
- Think proactively about unintended consequences
- Expanding the duty of care to both participants & researchers
  - Especially researchers who are from the communities and/or in contract employment without office space, health insurance, etc.
- Self-care, not in neoliberal sense, as “radical praxis” and “collective survival within a world that renders some lives more precarious than others” (Hobart and Kneese 2020: 5)



*“My friend the professor!” exclaimed one of the participants in the PhotoVoice session about to begin, “What do you have for us this time? What do you want to learn about? What we eat? Where we go? How we get there? I hear you want us to take some pictures, is that right? What are you going to do with them? Hey, as long as you give us those giftcards, right? I’m trading you these stories for a giftcard, am I right? But they’re still my stories and you gotta do right by me when you tell them.” (cited in Bose 2020, n.p.)*

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