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"Why Care *Now*" in Forced Migration Research? Imagining a Radical Feminist Ethics of Care

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Abstract

This article lays out the ethical, epistemological, and methodological reasons for radical care ethics in research in forced migration. Drawing on a growing body of literature and recent initiatives to codify ethics in forced migration studies, it highlights the transformational potential of a radical feminist care approach to the "ethical turn" in the field. I suggest that radical care ethics re-centers reciprocal human relationships in forced migration research to address specific ethical challenges posed by the criminalization of migration, extreme power asymmetries, precarities in migration status and politicization of migration policies. It is incumbent on all forced migration researchers to think proactively and *care*fully about ethics beyond procedures prescribed by institutional processes. I conclude with ways in which we can build on examples of radical care ethics in forced migration studies to imagine an "otherwise" (Povinelli 2012b) in our field.

Keywords

Migration, ethics, feminism, care

Introduction: "Why Care *Now*?"

In her 2007 Presidential address to the Association of American Geographers, Victoria Lawson asked her colleagues, "So, why care *now?*" (Lawson 2007, 1). In this article, I suggest that – over 15 years later – this same question is long overdue in forced migration studies. While several researchers, including critical feminist geographers, have made important practical, methodological, and epistemological contributions to advancing an ethics of care in research in displacement contexts, we have not succeeded in fully realizing the transformative potential of radical care in our field. This article is intended as a modest step towards closing this gap by bringing together the thinking to date in the context of the "ethical turn" in forced migration studies, and proposing some ways to foreground radical care ethics more systematically in forced migration research, pedagogy, and praxis.

Forced migration research takes place in contexts of oppression, power inequalities, legal precarity, politicization and the criminalization of migration. Migration debates are hypervisible and politicized in media and government discussions. Researchers in these situations thus navigate particular ethical challenges, as has already been documented by many colleagues (see, for example, summaries in Krause 2017; Bloemraad and Menjívar 2022; FMR, 2019; Clark-Kazak 2021). This article builds on this work, as well as the development of Canadian guidelines on research with people in forced migration (Clark-Kazak 2017) and the IASFM Code of Ethics (2018). I argue that radical care ethics has the potential to transform approaches to forced migration research. Drawing on examples from the broader literature, including other articles in this themed section, I propose ways to centre "moral responsibility for [our] politics and practices" (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002, 14) in *all* forced migration work. Foregrounding the radical care principles of reciprocal relationships, proactive harm prevention and emotional labour resets priorities in our research, teaching and ways of working.

In this paper, I use the terminology of "forced migration" to refer to contexts of human movement within and across borders, but also to situations of systemic, institutionalized efforts to trap people in geographically limited spaces (detention centres, displacement camps, behind closed borders) or legal precarity. I acknowledge the long-standing labelling debates about "refugees" and the contentious borders between refugee and (forced) migration studies. For the purposes of this article, I am interested in exploring how care ethics can inform ethical conundrums that manifest in contexts of forced migration, broadly defined.

Why a Radical Ethics of Care?

Care ethics, with its focus on relational ontology, is situated within relational ethics and is often explicitly feminist in its orientation. As Eyre (2010, 77) points out, "feminist research is ambiguous, contextual, and political, and requires meaningful dialogue at the local level, not the imposition of rules." Similarly, Mahrouse and Kouri-Towe (this issue) challenge researchers to imagine "political solutions that do not unintentionally reproduce the very power relations

we aim to challenge" and propose "provocative and politically transformative" change. By contextualizing messy human relationships, an ethics of care "calls into question universalistic and abstract rules" (Held 2006, 11) and "sees persons as relational and interdependent, morally and epistemologically" (Held 2006, 13). In this article, I draw on feminist approaches to radical care ethics to propose a framework for thinking about ethics more holistically within forced migration research.

I deliberately build on scholarship based on *radical* care theories, in response to critiques of "carewashing" (Chatzidakis et al. 2020) from Eurocentric and neoliberal perspectives (Tong and Philosophy Documentation Center 1995; Tong 1998; Held 2006), such as Gilligan's gender difference theory perspective (Gilligan 1977). These theories of care popularized by white feminists in the Global North have been widely criticized as "essentialist, ahistorical, and insensitive to difference of race, class, sexual preference, ethnicity, age, motherhood, and physical challenges" (Bender 1990, 5). In contrast, as Hobart and Kneese (2020, 1) explain, radical care is "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." Others frame this as critical care – "holding onto critique as a way of unsettling care" (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015, 635).

In this paper, I apply three key principles of radical care ethics, which are expanded more fully throughout the paper. First, a radical ethics of care is relational. Foregrounding reciprocal relationships requires researchers to *care*-fully consider our own positionality within power asymmetries and privilege, and how we amplify, (re)produce or critique discourses and praxis. Rather than centering ourselves, our work and our careers, researchers adopting radical care ethics need to explicitly refocus our priorities on *caring with* others by amplifying, uplifting and working in solidarity. Radical care theorists contend that relationships are interdependent, even in contexts of unequal power relations. A *care*-ful researcher acknowledges that we depend on the people and communities with whom we work, just as research participants rely on researchers' long-term commitment to sustained relationships and allyship. Indeed, Indigenous scholars have long called for reciprocity as a key ontological principle in respectful research that values and respects the contributions of different knowledge creators (Restoule, McGregor, and Johnston 2018). Because of this relational element, some scholars suggest a broader focus on relational ethics, but I prefer the concept of radical care because of its transformative potential. As Hyndman (2020) points out, "It also travels better; is less ethnocentric, as meanings and practices of care can vary from place to place, group to group."

The second guiding principle of radical care ethics is a proactive approach to preventing harm, in contrast to the dominant procedural ethics attempts to minimize or reduce harm (Petterson 2011). Situated within critical epistemologies that acknowledge power relations in the (re)production of knowledge, radical care ethics requires researchers to seek explicitly and intentionally to dismantle harmful power structures as part of research design. This includes building in (self-)care mechanisms and processes within the research design itself (Hobart and Kneese 2020). In forced migration research, such (self-)care needs to take into

account the differential impact of research on people based on their positionality within labour structures, including peer researchers, interpreters and contract researchers (usually mislabelled as "research assistants" – see below) who often do not benefit from secure employment, designated workspace and/or (mental) health insurance.

Third, radical care ethics acknowledges the productive work of emotions. In contrast to positivist notions of "objectivity", it validates "gut feelings" and encourages researchers to explore why they react and *care* about certain issues and events. "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). Radical care ethics also acknowledges the emotional labour that is required in research processes – from the research participants, gatekeepers, translators/interpreters, research assistants and the researchers themselves.

While developed in a healthcare context, radical care ethics has been applied more broadly to relational ethics in research relationships as both a normative orientation, as well as a way of doing and knowing. As Held (2006: 9) argues, "Care is both value and practice". In this paper, I propose a normative shift in the way in which we think about ethics in forced migration research, but also a change in the way we "practice" and "enact" and "do" ethics (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015, 629) in displacement contexts. As Martin, Myers and Viseu (2015, 635) argue, adopting care ethics means that researchers *have to be willing to be moved*, by incorporating "response-ability" into their research praxis. Because "care is *ambivalent, contextual* and *relational"* (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015, 63; emphasis in original), the "slipperiness" (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015) of radical care ethics, especially in comparison to procedural ethics, poses challenges to its analytical and practical usefulness. In response, in this paper, I propose potential practical ways to transform approaches to forced migration research building on the "why care *now*" momentum within the field.

Why Care *Now* in Forced Migration Research?

Some scholars working in forced migration have reflexively analyzed their own research practices and grappled with these ethical dilemmas for many years (Leaning 2001; Jacobsen and Landau 2003; Block 2013; Krause 2017; FMR, 2019; Saltsman and Jacobsen 2021). Indeed, one can identify an epistemological and ethical turn in forced migration studies since the early 2000s. Recently, Canadian researchers across academia, government and civil society, have developed "Ethical Considerations for research with people in situations of Forced Migration" (Clark-Kazak 2017). The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) adopted a code of ethics in 2018 (Clark-Kazak 2019). Some practical tools have also been developed, including checklists for organizations approached by researchers, as well as documents outlining participants' rights in research, which have been translated into several languages. These documents codified emerging best practices from a growing body of literature addressing the particularities of (forced) migration research in relation to the standard ethical principles of 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).

A comprehensive review of this literature has already been offered elsewhere (Clark-Kazak 2021) and will not be repeated here. Instead, in this section, I highlight key elements of existing scholarship and praxis to argue that the time is ripe for such caring conversations to take centre stage in forced migration research. Rather than being relegated to a panel at a conference or a "special" journal issue, radical care ethics should be foregrounded in *all* forced migration research, pedagogy and praxis. For too long, forced migration research has served the interests of powerful scholars, primarily based in the Global North. It is incumbent on all researchers to care *now* for several reasons.

First, in the context of the reification of national borders (Reynolds et al, this issue), differential immigration and citizenship status pose particular ethical issues (Banki 2013). Research can lead authorities to identify people who do not have formal status or documentation. For example, I was keenly aware of my hyper-visibility as the only international researcher in Kyaka II refugee settlement and my consequent monitoring by Ugandan authorities (Clark-Kazak 2011). Researchers can exacerbate vulnerability and surveillance for those with precarious status. Dahinden and Efionayi-Mäder (2009), for example, highlight ethical challenges of conducting research with migrants engaged in sex work in Switzerland, who were doubly marginalized by their legal status and profession. In some cases, research can cause those with naturalized citizenship to lose their legal right to remain in a country. For example, Zedner (2016) examines the human rights implications for naturalized citizens in the UK whose citizenship can be revoked on national security grounds. These ethical dilemmas are exacerbated when researchers have different immigration and citizenship status than the people with whom they are working. In most cases, researchers hold privileged positions within these constructed, politicized borders.

Second, and relatedly, power imbalances arise in contexts where researchers have freedom of movement, while those they are working with are "stuck" in limbo (Hyndman and Giles 2011; 2017) or mandated immobility (Brun 2015). This is obviously the case in research involving immigration detention, protracted displacement, or camps, but is also present to varying degrees in all contexts where differences in immigration and citizenship status – discussed above – mean different sets of rules and norms based on positionality in hierarchies of belonging. As Brun (2015) has argued, displacement entails temporal and spatial in-betweenness and power relations involving "processes of inclusion and exclusion and the identification of those who belong and those who do not" (p. 21).

Third, migration research takes place in politicized, and at times, hyper-visible spaces which can lead to several ethical conundrums. Scholars have cautioned against the ways in which policy agendas have influenced research agendas, conceptual frameworks and the production of knowledge (Chimni 2009; Bakewell 2008; Bradley 2007). While researchers can hope that their findings can lead to evidence-based policy-making, at times we are also co-opted into policy-based evidence-making (Stierl 2020; Clark-Kazak 2023; Baldwin-Edwards,

Blitz, and Crawley 2019). Over-researching can lead to research fatigue (Pascucci 2017; Omata 2019), undermining notions of voluntary consent (Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010; Hugman, Bartolomei, and Pittaway 2011), especially when people are "captive audiences", trapped in contexts of immobility, discussed above. As Hyndman (2001: 264) argues, "Notions of consent become moot in conditions where power disparities are so great, where people have been geographically displaced and dispossessed of their livelihoods. Do not assume that people want to cooperate in our exercises of power, as modest and carefully executed as such exercises may be."

Fourth, power imbalances inherent in migration and border contexts complicate ethical issues of ownership and benefits. While the majority of people in situations of forced displacement live in the Global South, most research is undertaken in the Global North (Bradley 2007; Hyndman 2010; Van Hear 2012; Landau 2012; Shivakoti and Milner 2021). Similarly, many displaced people face institutionalized poverty, while most researchers are relatively well paid for their work. These disparities underscore the ethical problem of relatively privileged researchers profiting – financially or professionally – from other people's misfortune. While there is a movement within migration studies towards amplifying displaced "voices" (Refugees n.d.; Eastmond 2007; Cabot 2016; Chatty 2016) in most cases, authorship and copyright remains in the hands of researchers with little to no direct experience of migration (Godin and Dona, 2022). In other words, many researchers can be accused of "stealing stories" (Pittaway, Bartolomei, and Hugman 2010).

Researchers must attend to these unequal power relations that manifest in forced migration contexts, and consequently, in the production of knowledge. While these power asymmetries are embedded in systemic histories and structures of oppression, they pose particular ethical issues for forced migration researchers. When conducting research in cross-border contexts, it is important to ask who decides 'what is normal', whose norms will be used, and what normative standards may be applied (Gifford, 2013). Ethics are context-specific and embedded in localized power relations and ways of knowing and being. As Lammers (2007) argues, forced migration researchers in cross-cultural power asymmetries must reflexively examine their positionality within hierarchies of knowledge and question norms with which they do not feel comfortable. In this issue, Mahrouse and Kouri-Towe encourage researchers to "examin[e] the reproduction of global power by excavating the complex relationships between geopolitical processes and everyday life."

How can We Care?

One of the critiques of the ethics of care is the ambiguity of this context-specificity and difficulties of practical applicability (Hammersley and Traianou 2014). Indeed, unlike the prescriptive approaches of procedural ethics, a radical ethics of care is deliberately open to interpretation in different contexts and relationships. For those accustomed to procedural ethics checklists, "a radically different set of models and normative concepts" (Pettersen 2011, 52) can be disorienting. However, Lawson (2008, 1) suggests that "our research, teaching, and professional practices might shift in conversation with care ethics." In this section, I would like

to draw on the wider literature, as well as research presented in this themed section to highlight some ideas for ways in which an ethics of care can make normative and practical differences to forced migration research.

Relational Interdependence Within Power Asymmetries

As argued above, one of the key characteristics of an ethics of care is a relational social ontology, which conceives of people as "mutually interconnected, vulnerable and dependent, often in asymmetric ways" (Petterson 2011: 52). While extreme power asymmetries characterize migration research contexts, these are not as simple as "powerful researcher" versus "powerless refugee/migrant". Rather, a constellation of government, non-governmental, multilateral, community and individual actors control access to dynamic migration localities, as well as life-sustaining services. By foregrounding the importance of these power dynamics within multiple relationships, an ethics of care approach makes the researcher more aware of the consequences of our actions – from the way we pose a research question, to our methods, to how we describe our findings in a media interview. As Lawson (2007: 6) argues, "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."

The feminist concepts of intersectionality and reflexivity also provide lenses through which researchers can iteratively tune in to these shifting dynamics of connection and responsibility within mobile research contexts. Popularized by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to describe overlapping systems of oppression, intersectionality provides a helpful analytical framework to interrogate multi-layered, asymmetric power relations (see also Sen, Iyer, and Mukherjee 2009). Reflexivity requires researchers to recognize our own positionality within these intersecting power relations, and how it impacts the ethics and results of our research (England 1994). In a similar way, "Care ethics, then, challenges us to be attentive and responsive to our own location within circuits of power and privilege that connect our daily lives to those who are constructed as distant from us" (Lawson 2008, 8). Schmidt (2007) argues that forced migration research occurs in contexts of "heightened reflexivity" where the researcher influences both the "data" as well as the "field". Bose contends that serious attention to power relations between researchers and the communities with whom they work are even more important when such research takes place in "the shadow of fear" – that is, in contexts of "increasing levels of xenophobia, marginalization, and demonization" (Bose 2020, 1)

Some critiques of reflexivity have suggested that it can promote ego-centricity of the researcher, by making the research about them by, for example, re-centering whiteness (Faria and Mollett 2016). Indeed, forced migration scholarship has to date been dominated by white Anglophone scholars in the Global North, including myself. There is a pressing need to cite and amplify work that challenges these hegemonic ways of knowing and analyzing forced migration (Chimni 1998; Samaddar 2009; Banerjee 2022; Ramasubramanyam 2020). Similarly, "matters of care are already distributed into racialized, postcolonial, economic and

transnational stratigraphies […] empire and capital can operate through acts of affection and care" (Murphy 2015, 722). Some scholars have pointed out that care theory, particularly early work, "is rooted in white, middle-class, western feminist scholarship and based on Christian virtues" (Brennan 2021, n.p.). It is therefore incumbent upon researchers to not only acknowledge our own positionality and normative values, but also to "to situate an examination of care in the located practices of […] people and activists, starting with asking people how they define care" (Brennan 2021, n.p.).

Scholarship on forced migration research has been dominated by researchers with citizenship or secure migration status. People with lived experience of forced migration may be asked to "tell their story", but, to date have rarely been recognized as knowledge keepers, producers and researchers (Alio et al. 2020; Bradley, Milner, and Peruniak 2019). Indeed, even scholarship on "refugee participation" and leadership is largely written or co-written by researchers who have no lived experience of migration. I return to this point in the next section.

Reflexivity from a critical care perspective requires a paradigm shift: an empathetic positioning that requires researchers to take a hard look at our privilege, and how this privilege can be used for invited allyship purposes through a "politics of responsibility" (Lawson 2007, 6). Indeed, some critical care researchers reframe this as "response-ability", care as active and reflexive: "Given the asymmetrical power relations that care can set into motion, it must be enacted carefully: care's partialities, limits, and effects must be located, situated, and questioned" (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015, 635). Researchers also need to be honest with themselves about their real motivations. Abdelnour and Abu Moghli (2021), for example, propose a series of questions for researchers to think reflexively about their positionality on a complicity-liberation spectrum. A continuous process of reflexivity means that ethical reflections are built into all aspects of research design, with a continuous confrontation of ethical dilemmas. This contrasts with the procedural ethics model of a checklist and approval at the beginning of a research project.

Linked to these notions of positionality are questions of representation and ownership. Whitley (forthcoming) analyzes media use of photographs to frame boat arrivals as "crisis". Her article begs questions of who controls the story and who profits from the images. Within migration scholarship, these questions have been asked (Espiritu 2014; Kahn and Fábos 2017; Khosravi 2020; Grabska, Regt, and Franco 2018), but not frequently and systematically enough. As argued above, such research usually disproportionately benefits those who are least affected by forced migration. The feminist contention that the personal is political frames ethics as both a micro and macro issue, but also as relational. In other words, a feminist care ethic would encourage researchers to attend to layered, dynamic constellations of norms in their personal and professional research relationships. Practically speaking, this would mean more serious attempts at co-production of knowledge and co-ownership of the benefits of research. For example, in the *Displaces* project, participants owned the cameras and retained copyright over the photographs they took. This fundamentally shifted the concept of consent

and ownership, as it required researchers to continuously ask permission to reproduce images (Donà and Godin 2022).

Politically speaking, serious attention to who controls and benefits from representations of migration would also open up possibilities to challenge dominant ways of doing research. For decades, feminist scholarship has been attentive to the "politics of representation" and the "politics of engagement" (Hyndman 2001: 263) in politicized, cross-cultural migration contexts. Espiritu and Duong (2018) argue for a "feminist refugee epistemology" (FRE): "invoking the intimate politics of the everyday, FRE does more than critique Western media representation of refugees: it underlines refugees' rich and complicated lives, the ways in which they enact their hopes, beliefs, and politics" (p. 588). Similarly, Chatzipanagiotidou and Murphy (2022) advocate for "methodological dubiety" as a way to complicate notions of loss, but also of creativity. It is time for all forced migration scholars to draw on this work to more systematically think about the ways in which our work can reinforce dominant tropes or amplify self-representations of those who experience displacement.

Proactive Caring: From "Do No Harm" to Preventing Harm

A second component of radical care ethics as a normative value extends beyond the traditional ethical focus on "doing no harm" to "include a reasonably limited commitment to actively working for the *prevention of* harm" (Petterson 2011, 54; my emphasis). Indeed, many researchers working in migration contexts may also have a duty of care under professional ethics in professions such as social work, healthcare and law. Migration researchers work in contexts of systemic racism and xenophobia (Bose 2020; Stierl 2020). An ethics of care approach involves a moral imperative to speak out against these injustices and to practice invited allyship in a way that amplifies the experiences and priorities of those most affected by forced migration. This requires reflexive advocacy to ensure that we do not speak on behalf of "the voiceless" (Clark-Kazak 2023).

Radical care ethics also requires serious consideration of the potential unintended consequences in politicized forced migration contexts. Drawing attention to the ways in which discourse and categorization have real consequences in everyday lives of the people with whom we work means that researchers should pay greater attention to the words and labels we use to describe and explain complex phenomena. This has implications not only for empirical research – which is often subject to formal ethics review – but also to conceptual, theoretical and macro-comparative analysis, which does not come under as much formal ethical scrutiny. Categories determine access to resources. For example, as Kouri-Towe (this issue) shows, the way in which "family" is defined determines who gets sponsored to Canada. Words matter. As Lisa Stevenson (2014, ix) writes, "I am very aware of the potential violence of my words, of the possibility that they will work to fix in place that which moves, that which is not always the same as it was, or is, or will be." Migration researchers should be similarly challenged to acknowledge our ethical responsibility to carefully consider our analytical categories and the ways in which labelling can perpetuate violence, or challenge oppressive structures.

Another aspect of preventing harm involves a duty of care towards those conducting research. Procedural ethics is focussed almost exclusively on potential harm to research participants, primarily to reduce financial and legal liability for the institutions and researchers (Steele 2012). In contrast, radical care ethics, by emphasizing connection and relationships, opens up the possibility of expanding the duty of care to both researchers and participants. A growing number of forced migration researchers have personal experiences of forced migration. Others are graduate students or contract researchers in precarious work without adequate professional supports, insurance and mentorship. Research in forced migration contexts often requires researchers to collect and analyze data about painful circumstances, negotiate difficult power relationships, and sometimes requires a certain level of health and physical risk. Insufficient attention to protecting researchers themselves is thus problematic.

Similarly, self-care is important. Hobart and Kneese (2020: 4) acknowledge that the notion of self-care is "popularly associated with self-optimization" and has been co-opted into a "neoliberal model of care as one of moralized self-management". To be clear, this is not my intent. Rather, I draw on Hobart and Kneese's (2020: 5) ideas of self-care as "radical praxis", including acknowledging the necessity of "collective survival within a world that renders some lives more precarious than others." In forced migration studies, not enough attention has been paid to researcher self-care. Unlike social work or clinical psychology, researchers in migration contexts do not benefit from training and resources on self-care. Acknowledging that more research is being conducted by researchers who have direct experiences with forced migration means that we need self-care resources that are specific to the particular ethical challenges of migration studies, but also supports that take into account people's varying positionalities within hierarchies of power and privilege. Researchers who are from the communities in which they research may also not be able to "switch off" and have to navigate layers of accountability – to their friends and families, to their colleagues, and to the academy (Oda et al. 2022). Similarly, interpreters and translators who remain in the research community may face retaliation or social consequences for their participation in research studies. In many cases, students and emerging scholars are tasked with "data collection" of personal accounts of violence. Depending on the institutional environment, such "research assistants" (I prefer the term "contract researcher") may not qualify as employees and therefore do not have access to health and counselling services that full-time staff can use. Contract employees and students may not have formal office space, so can be isolated off-site, often in home offices that double as living and working spaces. While there is some recognition of self-care in related fields, the forced migration-specific literature is sparce (Vincett 2018). As a result, researchers are "badly prepared, poorly informed and often unable to prevent and/or recognize the dangers of the transmission of trauma" (Močnik 2020, 2). More resources need to be devoted to this issue in our academic programs, institutions and research relationships.

Centring Emotions and Emotional Labour

A third area in which critical ethics can be applied to forced migration contexts is through the "epistemological power of emotions (taken seriously in care ethics) for raising

scientific questions and for the conduct of our research" (Lawson 2007: 4). Rather than positivist ideals of "neutral" research, an ethics of care emphasizes the importance of *feelings* and emotions to guide complex decision-making in messy research processes (Felices-Luna and Lehalle 2018). An ethics of care holds responsible individual researchers to tune in to our moral compass, to constantly assess, and reassess the implications of our work, and to invest in meaningful, responsible research relationships. A care approach to ethics is more holistic and context-specific than procedural ethics rooted in notions of universal standards and applicability (Botes 2000).

While some could argue that research – and policy based on this research – should be objective and rational, the reality is that both research and policy agendas are often shaped by emotional reactions. As Brankamp (2021) argues, "Refugee camps in particular are the spatial expressions of compassion, fear, care, suspicion, or antipathy towards encamped people, while also incubating hope, solidarity, and belonging among them." Migration solicits visceral reactions of anger and fear, often rooted in racism and xenophobia. For example, many liberal democratic states implement costly and irrational policies of immigration detention based on public perceptions and fears rather than actual risks of absconding or crime rates (Aiken and Silverman 2021). On the other hand, forced migration events can also provoke empathy and compassion. For example, the tragic drowning of Alan Kurdi and the circulation of his photograph on social and traditional media (Durham 2018) prompted public and political attention to the "refugee crisis", however short-lived (Adler-Nissen, Andersen, and Hansen 2020) .

Sara Ahmed (2015) argues that emotions are productive; they do things. Radical care ethics focuses in on this emotional *doing* as an active and conscious approach to ethical research. As Murphy (2015) points out, care means being troubled, worried or unsettled. It is the "moral labour of care for others" (Dragojlovic and Broom 2018). This emotional labour needs to be more systematically acknowledge and "counted" in research ethics. Participants in forced migration research are often asked to retell and relive their stories over and over. Positivist science and some procedural ethics processes suggest that researchers should not become emotionally involved in these stories. However, Dragojlovic and Broom (2018) argue that this "distanced, dissociated, dis-engaged" approach, which is "accepted as normal" is, in fact immoral. Indeed, in too much academic research on forced migration issues, the stakes are too low. There are few personal or professional consequences for researchers who perpetuate harmful research practices and advance their own careers on the misery of others. Researchers need to be held accountable to *care*.

So, Do We Throw Out Procedural Ethics?

Radical care ethics provides an alternative to the dominant focus on procedural ethics within academic institutions. In this paper, I have articulated why I believe forced migration studies needs to centre care *now*. However, unlike many proponents of the radical care ethics approach, I do not think that procedural ethics, as manifested in professional codes and Research Ethics Boards (REBs; also called Institutional Research Boards – IRBs) should be

abandoned completely. Rather, I believe that such procedural ethics processes are necessary, but flawed and insufficient. As a white Global North researcher that aspires to a radical ethics of care, I am concerned with both the normative orientations and "rules" within forced migration research (i.e. procedural ethics), as well as the practical moral dilemmas researchers face in the doing of research (i.e. relational or care ethics). In this section, I would like to reflect on my participation in the creation of the Canadian ethical guidelines and the IASFM Code of Ethics to explain how radical care ethics can inform and reform procedural ethics, rather than replace them completely.

Indeed, one of the reasons for the creation of these documents was the absence of adequate procedural ethics oversight. In the Canadian context, non-academic partners specifically asked for checklists and practical tools because research within their organizations does not usually require procedural ethics approval. Similarly, at an international level, some IASFM members were concerned that the lack of IRB/REB structures in their countries meant that national and international researchers lacked the checks and balances of a formal ethics process, resulting in an ethical void. Indeed, variations across borders create administrative and ethical challenges for researchers engaged in international, collaborative research (Clark-Kazak 2021). Moreover, academic research that does not involve primary data collection, including analysis of texts, laws, policies, cases and macro-comparative data, including social media and big data, is generally not subject to formal ethics approval. However, such "non-academic" and secondary research can still directly and indirectly impact people's lives through programming, policy and public perceptions and therefore is not without ethical dilemmas.

In these contexts, the Canadian documents (Clark-Kazak 2017; Centre for Refugee Studies, Canadian Council for Refugees, and Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, n.d.) and IASFM Code of ethics (2018) provide a process through which scholars are invited to think through a series of questions in relation to key ethical principles of voluntary informed consent; confidentiality and privacy; and risks and benefits of their research. These standardized rules and norms can serve as checks and balances on research, even research that is not subject to formal procedural ethics review. Indeed, even within these procedural processes, it was possible to embed key care ethics principles, such as reciprocity, partnership, competence and equity.

Another lesson drawn from creating these documents was that IRB/REBs often lack knowledge of migration-specific ethical considerations. Procedural ethics processes tend to be risk-adverse because of the potential legal liability that research entails for academic institutions (Lowman and Palys 2001). As a result, it may be difficult for researchers to get procedural ethics clearance for research with groups who are deemed "vulnerable", for topics perceived as "sensitive" or for work involving informal or "illegal" activities (Bragg 2021). Research in forced migration contexts often ticks off all three of these "red flag" boxes. As a result, many migration researchers have had their research refused or severely restricted, particularly if it involved undocumented people or children (Clark-Kazak 2019b). But, not

conducting research and thereby reducing opportunities to learn about forced migration experiences is also ethically problematic. The Canadian guidelines and IASFM Code therefore allowed for standardized, widely accepted and endorsed standards, which were rooted in care ethics, to be used to inform IRB/REB processes.

In other words, codification of norms helped to adapt procedural ethics to forced migration realities. In the opening paragraph, the IASFM Code of Ethics (2018) states, "Similarly to how Indigenous research methodologies incorporate a broad, engaged and critical notion of ethics that recognizes power differentiations and the agency of the participants within exploitive research histories, this document sets forth principles that are starting points for respectful research." An example of the codification of relational ethics in this procedural code is found under the principle of "autonomy", which states, "We acknowledge that too often forced migration researchers are positioned as "experts" on other people's lives and experiences, and too often speak for, or in the name of, people in forced migration." (IASFM 2018). Similarly, in the Ethical considerations document developed in the Canadian context, the guiding principles – equity; self-determination; competence, including a duty of care; and, partnership – echo key aspects of relational care ethics (Clark-Kazak 2017).

Discussions surrounding the creation of these documents also highlighted the limitations of these processes (Clark-Kazak 2019a; 2019b) and the point at which researchers also need to think carefully and deliberately about how radical care ethics should inform "ethically important moments" (Guillemin and Gillam 2004). At best, procedural ethics provides an overarching normative framework for behavior; at worst, they give a false sense of security once a research project has "passed" ethics review or checked off the boxes in a code. Felices-Luna and Lehalle (2018) argue that procedural ethics assume a standardized approach to regulating and controlling ethical behaviour, stripping researchers of discretion – and responsibility – over contextualized moral decision-making. In advocating for *both* a radical ethics of care *and also* improved, migration-specific procedural ethics, I suggest that we can move the field incrementally towards ethical praxis in *all* forced migration research, teaching and advocacy.

Reimagining an "Otherwise": A Call for Radical Care in Forced Migration Studies

Indeed radical care ethics has transformational and generative potential. As Lawson (2008: 1) argues, "Care ethics focuses our attention on the social and how it is constructed through unequal power relationships, but it also moves us beyond critique and toward the construction of new forms of relationships, institutions, and action that enhance mutuality and well-being." While this article has drawn on the work and ideas of feminist scholars, ultimately, caring should not be an exclusively feminist endeavour (Thelen 2015). As Hobart and Kneese (2020: 3) argue, "mobilizations of care allow us to envision what Elizabeth Povinelli describes as an *otherwise*. It is precisely from this audacity to produce, apply, and effect care despite dark histories and futures that its radical nature emerges." A radical ethics of care framework resets our priorities.

In this section, I imagine a future of forced migration studies that prioritizes radical care ethics with consequent normative and practical difference to research, teaching and praxis. While some of these recommendations may already be present in some projects and institutions, I argue that we need to draw on these examples of an "otherwise" (Povinelli 2012b; 2012a) to call on others in the field to rethink our ways of knowing, doing and being. A fundamental shift in the conceptualization and practice of research is required, not a tinkering at the edges of the status quo. I suggest an "otherwise" in forced migration research under three key areas: centring self-determination and reciprocity; challenging power hierarchies in research praxis; and valuing connection.

Centring Self-Determination and Reciprocity

Currently, most researchers choose research communities and participants, rather than the other way around. While participants may formally have to provide voluntary, informed consent to participate, in reality, power asymmetries make it difficult to refuse, as discussed above. In comparison to related fields like development studies, forced migration studies has been fairly slow to implement participant-led research projects. While participatory research can be misapplied and participatory action research is not a panacea, these methodologies should be more firmly rooted in our ways of doing because they deliberately centre the lived experiences and decision-making of those most affected by the research (Lenette 2022). Participatory approaches also foreground reciprocal relationships by giving all parties a mutual stake in the outcomes of the research.

Similarly, those who play key roles in forced migration research, including interpreters and contract researchers, should have greater self-determination in shaping the scope and design of research. They need to be fully informed of the risks of the work, and provided with better (self-)care structures and processes to support their health, well-being and career aspirations. Radical care ethics also attends to the division of labour in the (re)production of knowledge. Who is the researcher? Who is the "researched"? Who is the "research assistant"? How does this division of labour contest or reproduce inequalities? Whose knowledge and labour "count" – for research funding, for publication, for access to policy-making processes? Whose work are we citing and amplifying? These are important questions for researchers to ask themselves throughout the research process, but are not included in standard ethics procedures.

Self-determination also entails the freedom to refuse to engage with and endorse research that does not uphold principles of care. As Tuck and Yang (2014) argue, "analytic practices of refusal provide ways to negotiate how we as social science researchers can learn from experiences of dispossessed peoples—often painful, but also wise, full of desire and dissent—without serving up pain stories on a silver platter for the settler colonial academy, which hungers so ravenously for them. Analytic practices of refusal involve an active resistance to trading in pain and humiliation, and supply a rationale for blocking the settler colonial gaze that wants those stories." In forced migration contexts, Chatzipanagiotidou and Murphy (2022) similarly argue that we have a "responsibility (not) to document loss". Refusal is also

generative, by making space for an "otherwise" that we value (Tuck and Yang 2014). Espiritu and Duong (2018, 588) advocate a feminist refugee epistemology (FME) to "reconceptualize war-based displacement as being not only about social disorder and interruption but also about social reproduction and innovation".

Challenging Power Hierarchies in Research Praxis

Martin and colleagues (2015, 626) argue that there are two layers of care: what we enact in "*our relations with* the worlds we study" and "that which circulates among the actors". Engaging in the politics of care ethics thus depends on our positionality within these power hierarchies. I argue that the field of forced migration needs to be more proactive about providing space for leadership and authorship by people most affected by displacement. Very few scholars with first-hand displacement experiences are running forced migration research centres, projects and associations. In line with the IASFM Code of Ethics and the Share the Platform Initiative, there needs to be more systematic centring of expertise from people with forced migration experiences.

Similarly, those who currently control forced migration projects and institutions need to be held to greater accountability. The danger of a care-based approach is that it can be used to disguise paternalism. Given the recent interest in "refugee voices" and "refugee participation", it is important for researchers to seriously ask themselves whether their work contributes to amplification or appropriation. Open access publications are one practical way towards greater transparency and accountability: knowing that anyone can read what we write may make us think more carefully about how we present ourselves and where our knowledge comes from.

Valuing Connection

Finally, thinking proactively about a praxis of care in forced migration studies requires researchers to care-fully invest in research relationships – with people in situations of forced migration, with colleagues, with students. People are not "data" (Hugman, Pittaway, and Bartolomei 2011). Interpreters and contract researchers are colleagues making invaluable contributions to research and knowledge production, who need to be recognized for these contributions and supported with (self-)care resources. Forced migration studies also needs to value and invest in the care work of building networks, collaborations and associations. While all academic associations face similar challenges, because forced migration studies is more recently institutionalized, there is significant care work involved in creating structures, while at the same time holding less "prestige" for those who do so.

Conclusion

Research in forced migration is growing in scope, depth and political importance. The last decade has seen a proliferation of forced migration centres, degrees, training programs, journals and research projects. Over the past two decades, more attention has been paid to forced migration methodology, epistemology and ethics. At this critical juncture, we need to

centre care radical ethics *now* – to ensure that forced migration studies achieves its transformative potential. Historically dominated by white scholars from the Global North with no lived experience of migration, our field is long overdue for a deliberate and *care*-ful recentring of power, knowledge and leadership. As the IASFM Code of Ethics clearly states, "Forced migration scholarship often disproportionately benefits those who are least affected by displacement." A radical care ethics opens up the possibility of an "otherwise" – a transformation away from extractive and exploitative research to research praxis embedded in reciprocal, caring relationships.

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