'I will not be thrown out of the country because I'm an immigrant': Eastern European migrants' responses to hate crime in a semi-rural context in the wake of Brexit

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'I Will Not Be Thrown Out of the Country Because I'm an Immigrant': Eastern European Migrants' Responses to Hate Crime in a Semi-Rural Context in the Wake of Brexit

Abstract

This article examines Eastern European migrants' experiences of and responses to hate crime. Following the UK European Union Membership Referendum ('Brexit' vote) there was an increase in reported hate crimes against immigrants. The study focuses on the experiences of migrants in Lincolnshire, a region of England which has a significant migrant population, and which had one of the highest 'leave' votes. The focus on white migrants in this semi-rural setting offers an original perspective in the field of hate crime studies. We draw on semi-structured interviews and observations to identify temporal, spatial and relational factors in responses to hate crime. We uncover the insecure occupation of a 'third space' constituted by material, discursive and emotional practices. This positioning was destabilised post-referendum; but there was also evidence of the operation of agency within processes of 'othering', suggesting a transition from victim identity to emergent political subject.

Introduction

This article focuses on migrants' experiences of, and responses to, hate crime in Lincolnshire, a region in the East Midlands of England which has a significant migrant population and which had one of the highest 'leave' votes in the EU referendum ('Brexit'). The focus on white

migrants in this setting offers an original perspective in the field of hate crime studies shedding light on experiences of semi-rural racism, hate crime, and victimization which have tended to remain 'hidden' (Charaborti, Garland and Spalek, 2004). The article addresses a lack of familiarity with victims' experiences of hate crime (Chakraborti, 2016) by exploring the impact of these experiences on migrants' use of (and access to) public spaces. By uncovering the temporal, spatial, relational and emotional factors at work in processes of identification, we reveal both the insecure occupation of a 'third space' (Bhabra, 1994) and the operation of agency which suggests that this space may represent a transitional position between victim identity and political subject.

Lincolnshire recorded the highest 'leave' vote in the UK in the EU referendum at 75.6 percent of the total vote (Tammes, 2017). A large migrant population is employed in factories and the agricultural industry, while Boston, one of the area's main towns, is home to the highest concentration of EU migrants after London (Chakelian, 2016). According to the Migration Observatory (2013) the East Midlands has a smaller than average proportion of migrants, but has experienced a 77 per cent increase since 2001. Boston has seen a 467 per cent increase in its migrant population in a decade − the largest increase in England and Wales. 2.4 per cent of England's EU population originates from countries acceded to the UK between 2001-2011. 10.6 per cent of Boston's population of 65,000 come from one of the 'new' EU countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Latvia or Romania (Policy Exchange, 2016). Boston has been identified as one of the most segregated places in the UK and contains neighbourhoods of significant deprivation (Lincolnshire Research Observatory, 2015).

The focus on white migrants in this semi-rural setting offers an original perspective in the field of hate crime studies addressing: the scarcity of studies on 'hidden' groups such as white ethnic minorities; experiences of racism in a non-urban setting; and the impact of Brexit on experiences of hate crime. Notwithstanding the difficulties in defining hate crime which has been described as a 'conceptual quagmire' (Chakraborti, 2016; Wickes et al. 2016), we view hate crime as involving prejudice associated with a victim's 'minority status' (or perceived status) i.e. race, ethnicity, sexuality, colour, religion, gender and disability. Racist hate crime can be explained by a perspective which Perry (2001) calls 'doing difference'. This involves the institutionalisation of difference via unequal relations in employment where there can be race discrimination, and also in the cultural sphere where for instance the media may depict minority ethnic groups as the 'criminal other' (Wolhuter et al., 2008).

The article begins with an overview of literature on hate crime including definitional problems in relation to its 'ordinariness' and the need for differentiation between victim groups. We then consider studies of race and racism in non-urban contexts, and highlight critiques of the concept of 'othering', including how its binary nature sets up a frame of reference which fails to acknowledge a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994), and which denies agency to victims (Bhatt, 2006). We then discuss the (re)production of raciaised subjects in the context of Brexit. After outlining methods, we discuss findings which include: migrants' *experiences of hate crime*; the impact of hate crime including victims' *withdrawal from public life*; the impact of Brexit on *migrant identities*; and instances of *resistance* in the form of 'talking back to the othering gaze' (Jensen, 2011).

Hate crime

The UK hate crime policy framework as set out by the College of Policing (NPCC, 2004) makes reference not only to hate but to 'prejudice and hostility'. It requires police forces to record all hate incidents, defined or perceived by a victim or bystander as motivated by prejudice or hostility, even if they do not qualify for classification as a 'notifiable offence'. Although the protected characteristics that give rise to a hate crime are specified as race, sexual orientation, transgender status, faith and disability, agencies can extend their local policy responses to include other forms of targeted hostility (Chakraborti, 2015). However, Wickes et al.'s (2016) 'conceptual quagmire' means hate crime 'remains a contentious term, with its conceptual, moral, and legal basis continuing to be a perennial source of conjecture' (Chakraborti, 2016: 578). Chakraborti (2016) draws attention to a disconnect between victims' lack of awareness of available services to support them and service providers' lack of familiarity with victims and their problems, resulting in low levels of confidence in officialdom and of reporting, and implications for the continuing marginalization of victims.

Scholars call for greater differentiation both between and within victim groups. On the one hand, we might wish to include homeless people, overseas students, those with mental health, drug or alcohol issues, and members of subcultures; on the other, communities consisting of migrants could be divided along temporal lines, between political (older diaspora) migrants and newer economic migrants (Garapich, 2007). Chakraborti and Garland (2012) propose a vulnerability approach which focuses on the context-dependent nature of what constitutes hate crime and how various actors come to be defined. Perry (2001) has been influential in shifting the focus from

the individual psychopathy of offenders to societal conditions and the operation of power. Here, racially motivated violence is seen as an extreme response to 'the other who is out of control, who has overstepped his or her social or political boundaries, thereby challenging the entrenched hierarchies' (Mason, 2009: 86).

Studies have highlighted the 'ordinariness' of hate crime in terms of its banality, incorporating everyday kinds of incidents. In Kielinger and Paterson's (2002) study the majority of reported hate incidents were perpetrated by people who victims had come into contact with in their daily lives. Chakraborti and Garland (2012: 503) highlight banal motivations as including: a departure from standard norms of behaviour through an inability to control language or behaviour in moments of stress, anger, or inebriation; or from a sense of weakness or inadequacy that can stem from a range of subconscious emotional and psychological processes.

Hate crime and racism in non-urban contexts

It is only recently that scholars have turned their attention to experiences of hate crime and racism in non-urban contexts (Chakraborti and Garland, 2004; Cloke, 2004; Hubbard, 2005) and to the study of 'hidden' ethnic minority communities such as Muslim groups, white minority ethnic groups and rural ethnic households. Garland and Chakraborti (2006) note that studies of victimization have tended to focus on the urban setting and ignore experiences of rural racism. In their studies of rural racism in various English counties they highlight a lack of familiarity with difference among many white inhabitants. This resulted in the 'marginalization of newcomers from mainstream village activities, and especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds who are subjected to a process of "othering" from many white villagers' (p. 51). The racist hostility

that results include verbal abuse and physical attacks that constitute a pattern of victimisation. They also caution that 'it is unwise to make generalistic assumptions about the "minority ethnic experience" in the countryside as this can be multi-faceted and contingent upon social, spatial and temporal elements' (ibid: 58).

In his study of opposition to asylum centres in the English countryside, Hubbard (2004) notes that notions of the English countryside play a key role in the definition and consolidation of national values. He argues that 'the community opposition expressed towards … asylum centres was underpinned by a (white) rural imaginary that mapped deviance onto asylum seekers…' (ibid: 4). The dominant representations of the English landscape leave no room for ethnic 'otherness' (Hubbard, 2004). In addition, popular constructions of rural England which focus on images of 'idyllic, problem-free environments' and 'romanticised rurality' have 'masked the process of "othering" that works to marginalize particular groups in rural society' (Chakraborti and Garland, 2004: 383).

The 'othering' of migrants

The concept of 'othering' attempts to capture the practices and processes through which the 'outsider' is produced. As Bauman notes:

> In dichotomies crucial for the practice and vision of social order the differentiating power hides as a rule behind one of the members of the opposition. The second member is but the other of the first, the opposite (degraded, suppressed, exiled) side of the first and its creation. Thus abnormality is the other of the norm... woman the other of man, stranger

the other of the native, enemy the other of friend, 'them' the other of 'us'. (1991: 14)

However, the concept has been criticised for denying victim agency (Bhatt, 2006). Its binary nature also sets up a frame of reference which fails to see an in between or 'third space' and which, in the context of the differentiation referred to earlier in relation to people, temporalities, geographical locations and social spaces, denies active agency to a supposedly unified 'voiceless subaltern' (ibid: 101). In the *Location of Cutlure*, Bhabha's (1994; see also Soja, 1996) theory of cultural difference provides us with the conceptual vocabulary of 'hybridity' and the 'third space'. He develops Turner's concept of liminality to propose the concept of third space as a position from which new identities/potentialities emerge. 'Third space' is criticial of essentialist positions of identity and of 'originary culture' (Bhabra, 1994). Third space contains new possibilities. It is a space in which cultural meaning and representation have no 'primordial unity or fixity' (Bhabha, 1994).

Jensen (2011) addresses critiques of 'othering' with reference to McLaren's (1994) situated 'oppositional agency'. McLaren similarly opposes essentialist categories: 'difference is always a product of history, culture, power, and ideology. Differences occur between and among groups and must be understood in terms of the specificity of their production.' (1994: 126). In his study of young ethnic minority men in Denmark, Jensen restores agency to the 'othered' through strategies that he terms 'capitalization' (appropriating elements of othering discourses in an attempt to imbue the category with symbolic value) and 'refusal' (articulating distance from the category by 'talking back' to the othering gaze). Jensen's interviewees attempted to carve out a third space which was 'not defined by firstness and otherness, but transcends the dichotomy:

simply as a normal human being - not Danish, but also not different from the Danish' (2011: 74).

Building on Thomas and Znaniecki's (1918-20) pioneering work, Temple (2010) shows how immigrants occupy a 'third space' as part of 'social becoming'. In her study, Polish migrants had different orientations towards: the learning and speaking of English; the values they perceived to be characteristic of Polish and 'English' culture; readings of class and access to different sections of society; and how integrated what they wanted to become in a context of uncertainty about their length of stay. This differentiation is echoed in Ryan's (2017) notion of levels of 'embeddedness' in four sectors of household, workplace, neighbourhood and wider community.

Finally, studies show how migrants actively differentiate themselves through discourses of personal responsibility. In Cederberg's (2014) study, a responsibility to learn and speak the 'host' country's language and to resist becoming 'segregated' by 'excluding oneself' is invoked as part of the presentation of a 'responsible citizen' identity – a consciously 'managed' self that can be distinguished from other less 'well-behaved' immigrants. 'Boundary work' is engaged in by migrants to draw distinctions between 'poor subaltern' immigrants and themselves as 'mobile professionals' (Bygnes, 2015).

Brexit and the (re)production of racialized subjects

McDonald and Erez (2007) suggest that being a person in a foreign land carries with it a special set of vulnerabilities and disadvantages that add to and interact with other social statuses which people occupy. Even individuals who are relatively privileged in terms of education and other resources are 'forced to the back of the social line when they become foreigners' (p. 6). Fox et al.

(2012) show how immigration policy and tabloid journalism interact to reproduce 'racialized' subjects in relation to Eastern European migrants (Hungarians and Romanians) in the UK. They argue that while immigration policy includes subjects on the basis of shared whiteness, tabloid newspapers tend toward a cultural racism that is exclusionary on the basis of putative cultural differences. Racialization occurs when the category of 'race' is invoked in discursive and institutional practices to interpret, order and structure social relations. 'Race' in this sense is not an essential trait of migrants, but rather the socially constructed outcome of processes and practices of exclusion. Racialization does not require putative phenotypical or biological difference but can make use of (and/or construct) cultural traits as a basis of differentiation. Their case demonstrates that the nominal absence of somatic difference does not get in the way of xenophobic racism. Rather, racialized difference can be invented *in situ*.

Whiteness is not only a subtle determinant of immigration policy but also the contingent outcome of policy, practices, and processes that operate according to other logics. Tabloid media framings using metaphors of floods, deluges, inundations, swamps, streams, hordes and invasions 'are not openly or crudely racist; rather they hint at and simultaneously validate taken-for-granted assumptions about the relationship between immigration and race accrued from the past' (ibid: 687). Regardless of their actual race/ethnicity, culturally-established stigma is transferred from one group to another. This cultural racism occurs when 'essentialized cultural and social characteristics … are indiscriminately imputed to people identified with ethno-national labels' (ibid: 690). In the policy process, Eastern Europeans are desirable because they conform to racialized understandings of 'Europeanness' while in the tabloids it is not shared whiteness operating as a basis of inclusion, but cultural difference operating as a criterion for

exclusion.

In relation to the EU Brexit vote, Virdee and McGeever (2017) argue that the history of immigration to Britain has been so racialized over time that a reservoir of latent racism was activated in the referendum campaigning through the production of appropriately coded language. Messages ranged from immigrants 'sponging' off the welfare state and 'bleeding' the National Health Service dry, to being involved in criminality (Berry, 2016). Immigration overtook economic issues towards the end of the referendum campaign (Deacon et al., 2016). More than 6,000 racist hate crimes were reported to the National Police Chiefs Council in the four weeks after the result was declared (NPCC, 2016). Perpetrators made little attempt to distinguish between black and brown citizens and white European migrants: 'In their eyes, they were all outsiders' (Virdee and McGeever, 2017: 7).

Our study of the experiences of white Eastern European migrants in the post-Brexit climate, with its focus on the semi-rural setting of Lincolnshire and the 'hidden' experiences of victimization of this particular white ethnic group, presents an important and timely analysis which adds an original perspective to the field of hate crime studies and studies of migration, 'othering' and racism in non-urban contexts.

Methods

The discussion draws on data collected from semi-structured interviews with Eastern European migrants in Lincolnshire and observations at community meetings. Access was provided by Lincolnshire Police. Purposive sampling, followed by snowball sampling, was initially effective.

The sample was extended via contact with additional community groups and organisations (e.g. victim support services). The final sample consisted of 11 interviewees (eight women and three men, ranging in age from 20 to 50). They had come to the UK from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Ukraine and most had been in the UK for 12 years, often working in other parts of the country before settling in Lincoln or Boston for work or to establish a family. The observations (over 2 days) were conducted by the Research Assistant and included informal conversations with migrants at local community group meetings, access to which was initially provided by Lincolnshire Police. The specific details of the events attended are not discussed for reasons of confidentiality.

Participants initially claimed not to have experienced what they understood as hate crime, despite refering to experiences that qualified in law. It became clear that his was because in many cases their experiences of hate crime (including most prominently verbal abuse) had become routinized and normalised within everyday life and community interactions. We therefore tailored our interview schedule accordingly to explore community relations and sentiments around immigration and Brexit more broadly. Throughout the study we adopted an inductive approach, being guided by the emergence of key themes in interviews including any we had not initially considered. Analysis followed a thematic approach, a key aspect of which is flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2006). We followed Braun and Clarke's six stages of analysis which include: familiarising yourself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the report. The analysis was first conducted individually by each of the authors, and then identified themes were reviewed, compared and discussed. As researchers we were all active in identifying themes, selecting those of interest,

and disemminating them to various audiences. The study received university ethics approval. Participants' identities were anonymized by assigning participant numbers.

We recognise that recruiting through community organisations is likely to result in a degree of self selection of those who feel they have something to say. However, in a project the aim of which is to explore perspectives on and experiences of an under-reported crime, this may be seen as a strength rather than a disadvantage. It requires a broader approach and an awareness of any apparent agenda interviewees may have. Designing our interview schedule to explore community relations and sentiments around immigration and Brexit more broadly, was effecive as a 'way in' rather than directly asking about experiences of hate crime to solicit accounts of the kinds of hate-related 'incidents' which qualify as 'crimes' according to the legislation. This also enabled us, when undertaking thematic analysis of the data, not only to include the kinds of 'incidents' described, but to categorise and contextualise them. While our findings rest on a small number of interviewees, the observations we conducted in our meetings with police and community groups in the setting up of the project, during the observations, and in the presentation of findings to stakeholders, mean that we are reflecting a range of experiences and responses to hate crime from (white Eastern European) victims in the period following the 'Brexit' vote, which serve to illuminate the parameters of a hidden and under-reported phenomenon.

Findings

1. Experiences of hate crime: banal and everyday

Given the 'hidden' nature of the experiences of groups such as white eastern European migrants, it is important initially to highlight the everyday and banal nature of hate crime in this semi-rural

context – to surface experiences such as verbal abuse, physical and symbolic violence, and exploitation from employers.

Within the broader definition of hate crime which we adopted, the most common experiences our interviewees related were of verbal abuse. Being sworn at typically consisted of being called 'Fucking foreigners' (e.g. when chatting to a friend in a night club queue) and told to 'Fuck off' (interviewee 3, Hungarian, female, in UK since 2002). Interviewee 1 (Polish, in UK since 2005) told us that 12 years earlier when she first arrived, people were more interested than antagonistic but that had changed, first with the recession in 2008, when comments like 'Pack your bags and go home' or 'What you still doing here?' were heard, and then again following the Brexit vote, so that now, 'You won't go a week without hearing something'. Others observed that people found it much easier to be hostile and abusive online: 'I had a few incidents on social media where someone said to me that all of us should be deported, should go back to where we came from' (interviewee 5, Polish, female, in UK since 2004).

Those who had only experienced verbal abuse knew of others who had experienced physical violence:

> A lot of the guys like to go fishing… one of the gentlemen went to do some fishing and was approached by a family… after they hear his accent they started to say nasty things … and throwed stones at him … one of the stones hit his head so he was bleeding. (Interviewee 1, Polish, female, in UK since 2005)

Incidents also occurred in the workplace. A taxi driver, for example, explained how he regularly encountered xenophobia when listening to passengers swearing at 'foreigners' before they realised that he was one of them. On the day of the referendum vote someone left a note on his car windscreen which read: 'Have you packed your bags yet'? After the Brexit vote, he recounted:

People were acting like they've had unloaded gun in their pockets – they knew they can make us feel unpleasant … it was unloaded but it was shown to us… so it was that unwritten and unsaid situation that was making me … careful if you know what I mean. (Interviewee 4, Polish, in UK since 2004/5)

Others experienced exploitation from employers (e.g. having around £80 a week to cover expenses deducted without prior notification, or being hired as an au pair to care for one child when there were three). Such treatment came as a shock since, as one of our interviewees pointed out:

Before we even joined the EU we had agencies from the UK coming to Poland recruiting people… we had meetings for up to 200 people who were interested in working in UK … with potential employers… and they were saying… what we will get, they would sort out for everyone accommodation, work, everything needed…many health care companies, factories, agricultural companies… (Interviewee 1, Polish, female, in UK since 2005)

Interviewee 3 (Hungarian, in UK since 2002) worked in a clothes shop where she was not only

excluded by colleagues but had been assaulted by her supervisor who was 'against foreign nationals'. He called her a 'dipshit' in front of a customer, told her to, 'Fuck off back to your own country' and threw a bunch of keys at her, leaving a mark near her eye for days afterwards. The assistant manager who witnessed him verbally abusing her said, 'Oh boy, you must have pissed him off if he talks to you like that'.

2. The impact of hate crime: withdrawal from public life

The ways in which these migrants managed the perceived threat to their safety by withdrawing from public life and spaces had the effect of rendering them both invisible and silenced. Participants spoke of places where they had learned not to 'open one's mouth' – not only in 'rough' neighbourhoods where one would feel unsafe as a 'foreigner', but in town, at the pub or in a taxi:

> Some of my friends, they're engineers, they got PhDs and they don't go out to town and they don't speak our language. They speak English because they feel uncomfortable… people will start asking 'Oh, where you from?'…When you go to the pub now, you don't tend to speak. (Interviewee 6, Polish, female, in UK since 2007)

One participant explained how her friend's young son refused to speak to her on the phone on his way home:

> His mum called him and he just texted her saying 'I can't speak to you now; I'll call when I get back home'. When he got home he said to her that the taxi driver made such a

horrific comment that he was scared to speak to his mum in Polish. (Interviewee 1, Polish, in UK since 2005)

Others known to our participants led an extremely circumscribed life, avoiding certain public or community spaces, and this was amplified in the wake of Brexit:

[They] won't leave the house unless they go shopping to Tesco or Wilkinson or Poundland…never been in coffee shop… been in the UK for eight years but never went to coffee shop…because they don't feel confident or because they try before and something bad happened. (Interviewee 1, Polish, female, in UK since 2005)

There was a parallel process of feeling obliged to be 'accountable' for one's nationality, as illustrated by one interviewee's experience at a community meeting when a representative of a church organisation asked where she was from. When she said she was from Poland, he said 'I'm not asking your country, I'm asking the city or the organisation'. She went on: 'And I'm like, "Sorry, I just got used to so many people asking where I'm from that automatically I'm saying Poland"' (Interviewee 1, in UK since 2005).

A woman from the Czech Republic (interviewee 2, in UK since 2006) recounted how 11 years ago when she came for a finite period to improve her English, she had ended up working with a mixture of Portuguese, Latvians, Lithuanians and Poles, consequently learning more Russian and Polish than English. Returning in 2005 to Lincolnshire, she communicated comfortably with the large Polish community she found but gradually began to acquire what she saw as the British

sensibility of politeness. Now she gets annoyed when observing what she sees as rudeness, for example towards shopkeepers and service staff, on the part of the new wave of migrants from Romania and Bulgaria. Furthermore, having moved on from the comfort and security of her early exclusive associations with those (Slavic, Russian and Polish) people who shared cultural traits and festivals, to tending to 'cling more to the English people', she thinks that 'the immigration in this town is too much now'. This is less an issue of 'mass immigration' per se, she suggests, but more to do with the strain on public services from increased demand from people who do not speak English, as well as pressure on housing. The ambivalences of the processes of identification are revealed as she relates the last incident she experienced:

So that he becomes bilingual, she speaks to her young son in her own language. However, when another child of 12 years of age overheard them talking in a public park, insults followed, with the child calling them both 'fucking foreigners'. She shouted that she was going to call the police because it was racist and an English woman who observed the incident urged her to do so. However she regarded it as inappropriate since she attributed responsibility to the child's family. She speaks as a societal 'insider' when she adds that it hurt more coming from a child because, 'it makes you wonder what society is coming to'. She goes on to invoke the trait of politeness: she avoids speaking in Czech is in 'mixed' company in order to be 'considerate'. She knows what it feels like to be in a group of foreign-language speakers and thinks it is 'rude' if all those present can speak English but choose not to.

3. The impact of Brexit on migrant identities

In a similar vein, a Hungarian whose friends, after 11 years in the UK, are '99 percent British'

regards herself as 'a British person with an eastern European accent'. Comfortable with this until the Brexit vote, she now feels forced to reflect on official citizenship and moving again:

> We all know about Theresa May's propositions and it makes my future quite unsteady … *I will not be thrown out of the country because I'm an immigrant* … if I would have to move out of the UK I would move to Scotland … But I am a bit concerned and that's why I'm trying to mitigate it. (Interviewee 3, Hungarian, in UK since 2002)

A Polish interviewee with a long-term partner, house and job also speaks as a member of British society but her sense of identity has been 'knocked' by post-referendum events:

> It's really upsetting … looking at the United Kingdom. We supposed to be focused on … society, human rights … freedom of speech, movement, any freedom ... But recently … makes you feel like, is it really worth coming, trying to integrate, learn the language, educating yourself, working hard, if all you get is negative comments and abuse? (Interviewee 1, Polish, in UK since 2005)

For others, the impact was in terms of an explicit dis-identification performed through boundary work (Cederberg, 2014). The taxi driver is at pains to differentiate himself from migrants who attract public opprobrium: 'I would say myself that I'm not happy about some people being here. Because it makes yourself ashamed … I'm passing by all these benches and areas where people are sitting and all what they do, just sitting and drinking'. Nine out of ten of these people 'would be from exactly the same community back in (their own) country… that's a different-type level

of people', he adds. However, his experiences of hate crime are compensated for by the messages of support received from other British people (interviewee 4, Polish, in UK since 2004/5).

Participants were positioned within the 'in between' space described by Temple (2010) – a space which is not static or stable but subject to shifts according to events and influences beyond one's control. A major influence compounding this insecurity was media discourse (Fox et al., 2012). A Polish interviewee observes the way that both the local city and county newspapers provided 'a space for people to actually be racist, say racist things without anything happening'. One had published several articles since Brexit, focused on migrant workers and how much pressure migration puts on education and the NHS: 'And I'm thinking "Why? Why do you do it?" It's not really true what they say.' Such reports do not go unnoticed by 'native' language media:

> If you've got access to media from your own country, whether it's Poland or Lithuania or Latvia you get the message that people are not wanted in UK. (Interviewee 1, in UK since 2005)

She had to reassure her elderly father in Poland of her safety after he read a report of a racist attack on a man in her locality who later died. A reference she made to family 'left behind' highlights another element inherent in occupying a third space – the experience of loss. This was referred to by several interviewees. A Czech woman explained that the recent spike in hate crime had heightened her sense of loss:

I don't feel welcome here after Brexit ... And I see the beauty of my country and every time I just come back from that crying – I want to go home. (Interviewee 2, in UK since 2006)

The taxi driver, a self-described 'romantic', found Boston unattractive after having lived near 'lovely little villages like Mevagissey'. But he was no stranger to loss: 'You just start missing what you had, especially back home', where he had 'a few hectares of land and forest and fruit garden and two lakes and dogs and horses'. He believed that some people do not realise how much migrants have sacrificed by moving to the UK:

It's not like we following American dream, going, 'Yeah, going to be famous, I'm going to live in California, have a swimming pool and 20 bedrooms and 60 dogs … you sacrifice your life, earn so much as you earn and save just to go once a year to see your family. (Interviewee 4, Polish, in UK since 2004/5)

4. Resistance: 'talking back'

There was evidence of resistance to the negative impacts of victimisation which took the form of 'talking back to the othering gaze' (Jensen, 2011). This happened: by refuting banal 'othering' discourses; by taking direct action; and by criticising government positions and responses.

A number of alternative discourses to those constituting 'othering' were offered. In place of accusations about migrants 'taking our jobs' from those seen as unwilling to 'go and work on the fields or in chicken factory for £7.20 per hour, 12-hour shift', were representations of migrants as

tax-payers. Interviewees highlighted the inconsistency and hypocrisy inherent in the fact that British people with businesses in Spain and Italy are rarely enjoined to 'pack their bags and leave'. In place of blame for demand on educational resources from migrant children with poor English, were claims that they learn the language very quickly, not least because of being bequeathed values about education as the route to a 'better life'. In place of negative portrayals of all 'foreigners' as drunken rough-sleepers, were strategies designed to 'disaggregate' the 'other' and lay claims to 'normality':

> … there is nothing normal people can do about it. What are you supposed to do? Go on the street and take beer off drunks or drugs from druggies? I shouldn't be punished for someone else's behaviour … (Interviewee 5, Polish, female, in UK since 2004)

This same participant tackled someone on Facebook who had referred to some 'foreign idiots' jumping out in front of a car. She counteracted what she saw as xenophobia by replying, 'I think they are idiots because they are idiots not because they are foreign', adding that such comments only serve to make relations in Boston worse than they already are. Her riposte resulted in an 'avalanche' of abuse, including criticism of migrants who are not able to speak English.

Another context emboldening interviewees to take action was when it involved another. Having encouraged a fellow Polish person to report a crime despite perceptions that the police typically take no action, interviewee 5 became assertive in her demand that someone at the police station take a report from them. When the police were reluctant to do so she threatened to go to the press

'and create an article about the Boston police not co-operating with foreign nationals and ignoring me because I'm foreign'. 'And straightaway everything sorted', she said.

Such action was exceptional however and cultural factors associated with styles of policing and perceived issues of national identity were cited as accounting for a reluctance to contact the police. There was a lack of faith that any action would be taken by the police arising on the one hand from a tendency to 'solve things between ourselves' rather than be a snitch; and on the other, to the contrast between UK police who liked to look for causes and explanations and police in Poland, who wear guns and 'get things done' by being 'vocal' or even violent. A lack of faith in the UK police was also compounded by their historical neglect of the issues faced by migrant communities.

Pride was identified as a factor prohibiting reporting, especially for men: 'another thing is the pride… for males… you're the head of the house so you should be able to cope with things like this' (interviewee 7, Crimea, female, in UK since 2005). But it also operated for women, one of whom had urged her friend to report an incident but acknowledged that she herself had not reported the abuse she received in shops and online:

> … I don't want them to see me suffering. Because then they know that they can hurt me and if they can hurt me, 'Oh yeah, get in, give more'…And we quite proud nation. (Interviewee 5, Polish, in UK since 2004)

There was also 'talking back' to the government. It was seen as a failure of the government not only to have created a generation who have never worked, but to have fuelled a discourse of scapegoating migrants:

> Anything what is going wrong now in UK, whether it's economy or some sort of politics, the blame goes to migrant workers… we came here, we work, we pay taxes, but it's our fault. (Interviewee 1, Polish, female, in UK since 2005)

This interviewee also sees the EU negotiations as a reprehensible way for a country like the UK to treat its citizens: 'You just don't … [say] things like: "You need to wait because we want to get what we want and then we will decide what to do with you"'. Such government-induced insecurity not only represents the breaking of a social contract, but is experienced as a huge betrayal. This led not only to fragmentation between UK and foreign nationals, with increasing hostility accompanying each new wave of immigration, but to intra-group fragmentation arising from a historical mistrust between Polish people and Lithuanians which was amplified post-Brexit vote. The sophisticated analysis employed in these accounts of resistance from a relatively highly-educated sample of migrants and the passion accompanying the examples they gave of 'speaking back' highlights the emotional and embodied components of resistance.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper offers an original addition to the field of hate crime studies by presenting the accounts and experiences of white eastern European migrants in Lincolnshire, England. It addresses the tendency in hate crime studies to 'overlook' particular minority groups of 'hidden' people such

as white eastern European migrants with 'hidden experiences of vicitmisation' (Chakraborti, Garland and Spalek, 2004: 34). It focuses on their experences within a semi-rural context thus also shedding light onto experiences of hate crime and racism in non-urban contexts and spaces. These migrants experienced hostility from the community in a routinized and normalized manner highlighting the everyday, ordinary and banal nature of much hate crime (Chakraborti and Garland, 2012). The majority of hate crime incidents experienced by these migrants were verbal (i.e. 'pack your bags' and 'fucking foreigners') or symbolic (i.e. a note left on the taxi driver's car windscreen), but there were also accounts of physical abuse. This was exacerbated by Brexit which participants believed had further legitimized pre-existing community sentiments that migrants were 'a drain on local resources'. The findings mirror those of studies of racism in rural settngs whereby community opposition can be underpinned by a (white) imaginary and the mapping of deviance and outsider status onto migrant groups (Hubbard, 2004).

Since our interviewees had been living in the UK for over 10 years, their accounts also uncovered the dynamic nature of the experience of hate crime and some of the ways in which personal experiences of the phenomenon articulate with wider structural, economic and political events. Temporal factors are significant for differentiating the category 'migrants' in relation to: when they migrated; how long they have been undergoing processes of identification in a new country; and historical 'events' such as recession, the EU Referendum and 'Brexit' - events which serve to (re)activate latent hostilities which, when mobilised, disrupt integration both by and within (heterogeneous) migrant 'communities'. This demonstrates that it is important not to make generalistic assumptions about the 'minority ethnic experience' which can be 'multi-faceted and contingent upon social, spatial and temporal elements' (Garland and Chakraborti,

2006: 58).

Their accounts revealed the significance of place and space ('there', 'here', 'home' 'in between'). Many of our participants had lived and worked elsewhere before settling in Lincoln(shire) and several commented on being struck, on arrival, by the lack of diversity in the area. They shared with many UK graduates a dissonance between educational level and employment opportunities available to them but their experience of hate crime was peculiar to them. They were also 'out of place' in the areas in which they resided, at least in relation to their British neighbours there.

As a consequence of the hate crime they experienced, they and others they knew found themselves 'managing'/disciplining the self in a Foucauldian sense by occupying the 'privatised' space of taking personal responsibility for their own victimisation (reinforced on occasion by official responses). They also withdrew physically from the community and from public spaces. This included being hypervigilant in certain neighbourhoods, on public transport, and when participating in the night-time economy, and not drawing attention to their 'foreign language' or 'accent'. Some migrants retreated into the private space of their own homes, as the only place they could speak freely without fear of experiencing abuse.

Their accounts were also notable for the way they surfaced feelings: 'You feel like you are the guilty one', '(friends) feel uncomfortable', 'he was scared', 'they no longer feel confident'. We are (re)inserting (victims') feelings into the picture (Chakraborti and Garland, 2015). We are also extending the analysis by illuminating the interaction between the two sides' feelings. If we see

perpetrators' fears as not only projected onto but 'taken up by' victims in their individualised/privatised responses, we can identify a dynamic which, once it becomes 'normalised' in the way our interviewees described, establishes 'structures of feeling'. These are structures through which people become 'inmates' of their own homes (Funnell, 2015) and through which a politics of fear is perpetuated. As Thompson and Hoggett observe: 'The patterning of love and hate in conflict situations … provides a glimpse of the way in which feelings contribute to the dynamic ordering of public life' (2012: 8).

There was a suggestion that for those able to do so, a move out of the 'epicentre' of the post-Brexit-referendum 'spike' in hate crime to a different neighbourhood or to a rural environment, was a move towards closer alignment with their British 'peers' – from whom some received much-valued support. There is evidence of Ryan's (2017) 'differentiated embedding' across household, workplace, neighbourhood and wider community. But to reiterate, in each domain, the trajectory and patterning of the embedding process was to a significant degree determined by an individualised response from victims themselves rather than by legal or institutional responses.

The public spaces of social and print media and policy discourse was also experienced as hostile and complicit in both the perpetration of hate crime and the necessity for victims to manage it. For instance, this was reflected in instances when they had to reassure elderly family members who were fearful for their migrant sons and daughters after reading media reports of hate crime in UK. 'Home' as place also figures powerfully in migrants' experience of loss: of a former 'beautiful' home only now accessible via occasional holiday visits or in memory and

imagination. No longer having relational ties with one's country/culture of origin was identified as significant in the transition to a partial UK national identity, for example as 'British with a foreign accent'.

These movements back and forth in time and space reveal an unsteady foothold in a 'third space' (Bhabra, 1994) rendered even more unstable by wider events and influences. It is an 'unsteadiness' constituted by an alignment between: the ubiquitous insecurity within the labour market for the neoliberal worker-subject which these migrants largely espoused in their efforts to construct a self-reliant entrepreneurial self (amplified by the exploitation of dishonest and deceptive employers); and being victims of hate crime. It was an unsteadiness further compounded by the ongoing uncertainty, post-Brexit, of their status as UK residents.

This 'in between' status nevertheless leaves space for (constrained) forms of agency and we saw our interviewees exerting this in a number of ways, collectively portrayed here as resistance and 'talking back to the othering gaze' (Jensen, 2011). In addition to performing the kind of boundary work that portrayed them as distinct from those migrants to be found drunk on public benches, we saw them offering alternative narratives to those circulated by hate crime perpetrators and media outlets, in relation to work, education, health and housing. We heard them criticising and challenging state responses. Finally, some were taking direct action - on social media, in face-to-face public interactions and in interactions with officialdom. In the light of their accounts, we characterise these passionate and deeply-felt resistant responses as a rejection of a victim identity and as a staging post en route to the emergence of a political subject – one which evidences the operation of agency within processes of othering of these migrants,

graphically illustrated by one interviewee's assertion that she 'will not be thrown out of the country because I'm an immigrant'.

We acknowledge that this study focuses on the experiences of a small sample of migrants and therefore call for future research in hate crime studies to explore in more depth (and via comparative studies) the experiences of 'hidden' migrant groups in semi-rural and rural contexts. Greater discussion of the 'conceptual quagmire' (Chakraborti, 2016) around hate crime, experiences of and responses to it in non-urban contexts, and by various overlooked ethnic minority groups such as white eastern European migrants, is vital as we seek to map and evaluate the effects of the EU (Brexit) referendum.

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