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Special issue: Covid-19 and the Racialization of Migrants in the Global South

Guest Editors: SHANSHAN LAN (University of Amsterdam), WILLY SIER (Utrecht University) and ALDINA CAMENISCH (University of Neuchâtel)

Introduction: Covid-19 and the Racialization of Migrants in the Global South 1
by Shanshan Lan (University of Amsterdam), Willy Sier (Utrecht University) and Aldina Camenisch (University of Neuchâtel)

The 'Colonial Virus': Racialized Narratives During Early Covid-19 in Ghana, South Africa and Kenya 13
by Leona Vaughn (University of Liverpool), Allen Kiconco (University of the Witwatersrand), Nii Kwartelai Quartey (James Town Community Theatre), Collins Seymah Smith (James Town Community Theatre) and Isabel Zattu Ziz (Kibabii University)

***Buyel' ekhaya* (Go back home): Xenophobia against Black African Migrants during the Covid-19 Lockdown in South Africa** 31
by Linda Musariri (University of Witwatersrand)

Pandemics Politics: Class, Gender and Stigmatized Labor in Bangladesh's Garment Industry 47
by Dina M. Siddiqi (New York University) and Hasan Ashraf (Jahangirnagar University)

Covid-19 and Digital Anti-Sinophobia in Argentina 67
by Clara Baumann (University of Duisburg-Essen & IMPRS-SPCE) and Luciana Denardi (National University of San Martín & CONICET)

Racialization and Racisms in and beyond Covid, Colour and the Global South: An Afterword 91
by Diana Yeh (City, University of London)

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Introduction: Covid-19 and the Racialization of Migrants in the Global South

by Shanshan Lan (University of Amsterdam), Willy Sier (Utrecht University) and Aldina Camenisch (University of Neuchâtel)

Abstract

This introduction reviews existing literature on the racialization of migrants during pandemic times and outlines the major contribution of the papers in this collection to the literature on race, pandemics and South-South racialization. This Special Issue shifts the setting from the Global North to the Global South in examining the racialized experiences of Asian and African migrants during the Covid-19 pandemic, presenting case studies drawn from South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Bangladesh and Argentina. It attempts to bridge the gap between race and migration studies by highlighting the multifaceted ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic disrupts, perpetuates and reconfigures existing social hierarchies and unequal power relations in the Global South. It also highlights the historical and structural contexts that shape processes of racialization along multiple axes of social inequality, such as class, gender, nationality, language, religion, citizenship and immigration status.

Keywords: Covid-19, South-South racialization, race, migration, Global South

Introduction

The global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 not only led to the closure of national borders and a near suspension of international mobility, but also to a resurgence of social 'othering' and related racist and nationalist narratives and practices. Following the historical pattern of marginalized and racialized social groups being blamed for disease (Chamberlain 2020), the pandemic has been accompanied by a global uptick of racism and xenophobia against various groups of migrants and minorities, particularly those who look Chinese or East Asian (Wang et al 2021; Yeh 2020). While much has been written on how migrants are racialized and stigmatized in the Global North, little is known about racism and xenophobia against migrants in Asia, Africa and Latin America during the Covid-19 pandemic. This special issue examines migrants' diverse experiences of racialization specifically in the Global South. The papers highlight how (post-) colonial continuities and the specificity of local historical, political, legal and cultural contexts generate new forms of racialization during Covid-19 time based on the intersections of class, gender, nationality, citizenship and ethnicity.

In their study of the racialization of labour in Chinese enterprises in Africa, Sautman and Yan (2016) propose a model of South-South racialization that is markedly different from the racialization of labour in the Global North. They argue that racialization between Chinese and Africans is a co-constitutive process which involves multiple racializers, such as Chinese employers, African workers, Chinese in China, elite Africans, western politicians and the media. This special issue rethinks the concept of South-South racialization in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic when the intensified use of digital platforms and social media facilitates new virtual mobility and boundary (un)making practices. Rather than reifying the North/South binary, we critically reflect on the interconnectedness of the racialization of migrants in the Global South and the Global North. We understand racialization as a dynamic historical process that is mediated by social and institutional structures both locally and transnationally, such as local state lockdown policies, global capitalism, postcolonialism and diaspora politics. We argue that the Covid-19 pandemic not only intensifies and transforms existing social hierarchies and regimes of mobility (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013), but also accentuates and changes pre-existing patterns of racialization in the Global South. Additionally, we highlight the emergence of social media as a major site of racialization and anti-racist grassroots mobilization.

Race, Racism, and Racialization

According to Roger Sanjek, ‘Race is the framework of ranked categories segmenting the human population that was developed by western Europeans following their global expansion beginning in the 1400s’ (1994: 1). While it is important to acknowledge the western colonial origins of race and racism, scholars also call attention to the reproduction and transformation of racial meanings in new historical contexts such as transnational migration, global capitalism, immigration control and nation-building, multiculturalism, and diversity (Bonilla-Silva 2017; Mullings 2005; Omi and Winant 1994; Thomas and Clarke 2013). In addition to this historical dimension, scholars also note the importance of the social and cultural contexts in mediating the transnational circulation of racial knowledge, especially the intersection between indigenous concepts of group differentiation and western racial ideologies (Guridy 2010; N. Kim 2008; Lan 2012; Stam and Shohat 2012). In his classic work *Black Folk Here and There*, St. Clair Drake (1987) exposes the limitations of the US context in theorizing race and racism by examining the multifaceted nature of blackness in various non-western cultures. Kowner and Demel (2015) argue that modern constructions of race in East Asia and the West have been the outcome of ongoing interactions and of the exchange of knowledge between the two regions.

To capture the dynamic and intersectional nature of racial meanings, various scholars point to the important concept of racialization. Omi and Winant define racialization as ‘the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group’ (1986: 64). Murji and Solomos regard racialization as ‘a core concept in the analysis of racial phenomena, particularly to signal the processes by which ideas about race are constructed, come to be regarded as meaningful, and are acted upon’ (2005: 1). The historically and culturally specific nature of racial meanings points to the need to de-centre the western notions of race and racism and to examine racism and racialization in its plurality of forms. In his study of labour relations in pre-war Hawai’i, Jung (2002) criticizes a unidimensional definition of racism that is based primarily on the superiority/inferiority binary. He argues that Japanese and Filipino workers face different racisms, one based on presumed racial inferiority (Filipinos), the other on potential disloyalty to the American nation (Japanese). Bonnett (2018) uses the term ‘multiple racializations’ to capture diverse racialization processes in different parts of the world and their intertwining with multiple modernities.

In this Special Issue, we study the shifting meanings of race and racism in post-colonial non-western societies, where racist institutional structures were either absent or had been significantly undermined due to decolonization, anti-racist movements and nation-building projects in the Global South. In doing so, we bring three bodies of literature into dialogue: those on the racialization of migrants in the Global North, the racialization of migrants in the Global South and racialization during pandemics. Finally, we explain the contribution of this collection of papers to theories of South-South racialization.

Racialization of Migrants in the Global North

In the countries of the 'Global North', processes of racialization have mostly been described in relation to populations with an immigrant background. However, constellations of, awareness of and the terminologies used to talk about racialization vary across regions and countries. The US context is shaped by the historical legacy of slavery and the socio-economic polarization between 'black' African Americans and 'whites', while Asian Americans have commonly been framed as a 'model minority' (Prashad 2000). In many European countries the steadily changing discourses on and patterns of migration are marked by different framings and contexts. In France, for example, the republican tradition has become associated with a denial of racialized social differences in the country, whereas in Germany the debate is dominated by the notion of ethnicity, and the uptick in Islamophobia has led to new debates and targets of racialization all over Europe. Erel et al. (2016) find that literature that engages with racism often stresses the continuities of racialized constellations and the distinctions between citizens and non-citizens that are embedded in European migration regimes. At the same time, such scholarship highlights the differential nature of such racialization processes in the context of specific groups of migrants from different national backgrounds, and of additional characteristics such as class, gender, and religion.

Grosfoguel et al. (2015) make distinctions between three main sorts of racialization that target different groups of immigrants in the Global North. What they frame as the 'colonial/ racial subjects of empire' are those groups that were directly colonized by a given country and subsequently racialized and placed in an inferior position vis-à-vis the colonizers. In today's social hierarchies, such groups are often at the bottom of social hierarchies in the countries of the Global North, even when they hold citizenship in these countries. The second category includes 'immigrants' 'who are racialised as "white" and experience upward social mobility in the first or second generation.' Examples of this group include intra-European migrants or migrants from other regions of the world but of European origin, 'such as Euro-Australians, or Euro-Latinos, Euro-Africans, Eastern Europeans, etc.' (ibid. 642). However, such groups often experienced discrimination during the initial stages of their migration and had to go through a process of 'becoming white' (Roediger 1992; Guglielmo 2003). The third category are 'colonial immigrants' or 'those migrants coming from peripheral locations who, although never directly colonised by the (…) country they migrate to, at the time of arrival are "racialised" in similar ways to the "colonial/racial subjects of empire" who were already there.' They thus experience a similar process of 'racial inferiorisation' and often share similar socio-economic positions, even though they 'may have higher class backgrounds than the "minorities" or "migrants" that are among the "colonial/racial subjects of empire"' (Grosfoguel et al. 2015: 643).

In the context of the United States, recent scholarship on race and migration has been attempting to move beyond the black and white binary to examine the interconnectedness of multiple minority experiences in a hierarchical racial structure that is marked by white supremacy (Almaguer 1994; Lan 2006; Lee 2003; Ngai 2004). One prominent example is literature focusing on interracial tensions between African Americans and migrants from Asia. In her study of Korean/ Black relations in New York City, C. Kim (1999) notes a process of the racial triangulation of Asian Americans marked by two major axes: that of superior/inferior and that of insider/foreigner. While Asians are considered superior to Blacks and inferior to Whites, they are also racialized as forever foreigners vis-à-vis Blacks and Whites, who are constructed as naturalized members of the American nation. Jun's (2011) research on Black orientalism in the late nineteenth-century African American press foregrounds the multiple layers of contradictions in inter-minority racialization. On the one hand, orientalist tropes—the construction of the Chinese as the uncivilized heathen, the portrayal of Chinatown as a place full of social vice and moral corruption, and the depiction of exotic Chinese customs—were used by African Americans as powerful weapons to fight against racial stereotypes of Blacks as primitive, irrational, immoral and pre-modern and thus to justify their own entitlement to modernity and American citizenship. On the other hand, Black orientalism was compromised by the Black press's unanimous denunciation of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Such literature attests to the multiplicity of racialization processes and the necessity to examine the pluralization of meanings of race and racism in different historical contexts.

The Racialization of Migrants in the Global South

Scholars have used different terms to describe racism and racialization in the Global South, i.e. non-Western forms of racialization (Bonnett 2018), South-South racialization (Sautman and Yan 2016), new racism (Ang 2018) and racism with Chinese characteristics (Lan 2016). Following these pioneering works, this special issue also makes an analytical distinction between racialization in the Global North and the Global South to highlight the mediating role of specific historical and cultural contexts. Instead of reifying the North/South binary, we critically reflect on how the racialization of migrants in the Global South may reproduce, if at times in fragmented and distorted ways, the racializing discourses of the Global North. We are also interested in examining how the Covid-19 pandemic gave rise to new forms of racialization. In general, the racialization of migrants in the Global South is marked by three characteristics. First, it moves beyond the black and white binary which dominates race relations in the major western countries. Second, it often involves racialization between co-ethnic groups. Finally, with the rise of Asian economies, white migrants are increasingly being subjected to racialization in Asian societies. We review three bodies of literature related to these themes.

The recent migration of Africans to China and Chinese to Africa serves as a good example of racialization beyond the black and white binary. While racism against black Africans in China is a highly contentious topic, some scholars have already noted limitations in applying western notions of race and racism uncritically to the Chinese context. In her research on African traders in Guangzhou, Lan (2016) argues that anti-black racism in China cannot be interpreted solely within the black and white binary. Instead, it must be situated within the larger context of the triangular power relations between China, Africa and the West. Sautman and Yan (2016) complicate anti-black racism among Chinese migrants in Africa by noting their contradictory roles as both racializers and victims of racialization. Both groups of scholars also note the importance of the indigenous Chinese concept of *suzhi* (roughly translated as quality) as a major criterion for constructing racialized differences between Chinese and Africans. The bi-directional nature of grassroots migration between China and Africa also points to a process of mutual racialization in daily interactions between Chinese and African migrants, though heavily mediated by western racial ideologies (Lan 2019; Sautman and Yan 2009). In sum, the existing literature on racialization between Chinese and African migrants examines it not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a complex process that is embedded in labour migration, state immigration policy, geopolitical tensions between China and major western countries and local election politics in Africa (Lan 2015; Sautman and Yan 2014; Yan and Sautman 2012).

Racialization between co-ethnic groups in the Global South is sometimes conceptualized as racialization without white domination or racism by Asians and among Asians (Ang 2018). However, we suggest that the absence of a white-majority population does not prevent the circulation of white-supremacist ideologies in the Global South. It is important to note that co-ethnic racialization is often not based on phenotypical differences, but on a multitude of factors such as ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, language and culture. Iwata and Nemoto (2017) find that Japanese-Brazilian migrants are racialized in

Japan as the culturally inferior racial Other based on their nationality and are treated as low-skilled workers by the Japanese state. In contrast, white migrants from western countries are regarded as culturally superior by Japanese residents and are granted work visas as highly skilled migrants by the state. Ang's (2018) research on Singapore's new Chinatown shows that the racialization of newly arrived Chinese migrants by Singaporean-Chinese both echoes colonial racism and reflects the intersection of global capitalism and Singapore's local modernity. An exceptional case is McDuie-Ra's (2015) study of racism in metropolitan India against migrants from its northeast borderland. He argues that migrants from the northeast face race-based violence in Indian cities due to their phenotypical differences and their classed and gendered positions as migrant service workers. His research also situates the debates on race in India in the larger historical context of nation-building projects and borderland politics in Southeast Asia.

The racialization of white migrants in the Global South is marked by a notable contradiction. On the one hand, whiteness continues to function as a status symbol and can easily be converted into various types of social privilege (Fechter 2005; Kunz 2020; Lan 2011; Leonard 2010; Stanley 2012). Leonard (2019) and Camenisch and Suter (2019) even suggest that whiteness can be an essential skill that different western migrants bring to China's job market. On the other hand, various scholars also note the decline of white privilege in Asian societies due to the recent rise of Asian economies (Farrer 2019; Hoang 2015). In her research on non-elite, non-managerial European professionals in Japan and Singapore, Hof (2021) draws attention to the passive nature of whiteness, that is, when whiteness is reduced to tokenism and stops bringing expected social privileges and benefits to her participants. Camenisch (2022) similarly describes the racialized 'middling' positionalities of white European migrants in China, which she finds to be characterized by racialized elevation and subjugation simultaneously, equally shaped by the continuities of white privilege and an atmosphere of 'Chinese ascendancy'. Attending to the increased diversity and social stratification among white migrants in China, Lan (2022) examines the mutually constitutive nature of privilege and precariousness in the racialization experiences of western English teachers. She identifies a hierarchical ranking of different groups of white teachers based on their nationality and English-language proficiency in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in China. In sum, the existing literature on the racialization of white experiences in the Global South not only benefits from critical whiteness studies in the West, it also breaks new ground by identifying new sites and new norms of racialization beyond Europe and North America.

Pandemics and Racialization

Historically, marginalized and racialized social groups have repeatedly been blamed for the spread of infectious diseases (Chamberlain 2020). Shah's (2001) research on race and epidemics in San Francisco's Chinatown in the nineteenth century reveals the racialization of Chinese immigrants as filthy and diseased, and as the carriers of such incurable afflictions as smallpox, syphilis and bubonic plague. He argues that the demonization of Chinese immigrants serves the purpose of upholding white, heterosexual norms in public health policy. Scholars who have studied media reports in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia during the Ebola crisis also note how racializing narratives about this virus contribute to long-standing discussions about immigration. They show that the fight against Ebola feeds into discourse about the need for intensified border controls to keep out infected, suspected and racialized bodies (Murdocca 2003; Adeyanju and Oriola 2010; Monson 2017). The Western media's racialization of Ebola as 'African', 'other' and 'scary' presents Africa as a site of disease and conflates blackness with being diseased (Monson 2017). Murdocca (2003) argues that racializing discourses about infectious diseases construct a distinction between 'respectable' and 'degenerate' bodies that strengthens the racial fantasies that underpin ideas about Canadian nationalism.

In the case of Covid-19, although the virus originated in China, not in Africa, the dynamics that unfolded after the outbreak were similar. Media across the world produced narratives about why this virus came into existence 'there' and not 'here', focusing in particular on ideas about exotic Chinese eating habits and the significance of China's 'wet markets' (Lynteris and Fearnley 2020). Such media representations not only revive a colonial discourse of Orientalism but also reinforce biological racism, as Asian bodies are conflated with the Covid-19 virus. For example, the former US president Donald Trump repeatedly referred to Covid-19 as the 'China virus', and an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* described China as the 'real sick man of Asia' (Mead 2020). In line with Murdocca's (2003) analysis of Ebola as an African problem that Canada needed to protect itself from by insulating itself, countries around the world imposed travel bans on Chinese citizens, which were later extended to other countries where the virus had been detected. Following the production of ideas about a racialized group that carries and spreads this virus, Chinese and East Asian-looking people living in western countries reported being subjected to racist encounters (Wang et al. 2021; Yeh 2020). In the United States, a non-governmental organization called 'Stop Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Hate' reported more than 1135 experiences of discrimination during the first two weeks of the Covid-19 outbreak (A3PCON and CAA 2020). Going beyond the context of the United States, Human Rights Watch also reports on anti-Asian violence in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, as well as the Covid-19-fuelled discrimination of Muslims in Sri Lanka, India and Myanmar and of Africans in China (Human Rights Watch 2020).

The Special Issue

The contributors to this special issue, primarily from the social sciences, have substantial experience working with immigrant and minority groups in the Global South. Their research methodology is marked by a combination of online and offline methods, such as participant observation, online and live interviews, discourse analysis and media analysis. This special issue contributes to existing literature on pandemics and racialization, as well as to debates on South-South racialization, in three ways.

First, all papers in this Special Issue bring to the fore how pre-existing boundary-making projects with colonial roots have flourished after Covid-19. They illustrate the historical continuities of racism and racialized practices against migrants and people of colour, such as the Apartheid regime in South Africa (Musariri), colonial and Orientalist tropes in Bangladesh (Siddiqi and Ashraf) and the colonial concept of race in Africa (Vaughn et al.). Relatedly, several papers analyse narratives about 'risks'. For example, based on collaborative research in South Africa, Ghana and Kenya, Vaughn et al. discuss the emergence and spread of the black immunity myth in these three countries. This myth is a part of the Covid-19 'racialised infodemic', which refers to false information circulating about the virus and propagating ideas about how people identified as belonging to particular 'races' are either more or less at risk of contracting and spreading the Covid-19 virus. They explain that attributing the 'risk' label to persons relates back to colonial strategies that favoured the behavioural and cultural norms of the powerful over those of the marginalized. This finding resonates with the article by Siddiqi and Ashraf on the stigmatization and othering of garment factory workers in Bangladesh, whose coerced mobility led to them being identified as 'major vectors of disease, and stigmatized as reckless, selfish and wilfully endangering the lives of others' (Siddiqi and Ashraf). The role of mobility in being classified as risky is highlighted by several authors (Siddiqi and Ashraf, Vaughn et al., Musariri) but becomes especially clear in Musariri's research on xenophobia against external Black African migrant workers in South Africa during the early Covid-19 era.

Second, the intersectional analytical approach taken by these papers sheds light on the unevenness and heterogeneous nature of South-South racialization. They show how narratives of alterity are becoming more complex and are not merely based on phenotypical differences or nationality, but also involve ideas about class, mobility and risk. The Bangladeshi garment workers in Siddiqi and Ashraf's paper are othered, and even dehumanized and animalized, along racialized class lines that imagine labouring bodies as less vulnerable to disease. The migrants in South Africa in Musariri's paper are not racialized based on phenotypical differences, but placed on the intersection of class, nationality and immigration status. Moreover, this paper shows that narratives of alterity can shift as the racial discourse about 'black immunity' that was dominant in the initial phase of the pandemic changed into xenophobia aimed at people with specific nationalities who were singled out as scapegoats and economic parasites undeserving of protection and treatment against the virus.

Last but not least, the papers in this collection highlight the contradictory role of the digital media, which both helps spread racialized stereotypes and enables grassroots resistance and social activism (Denardi and Bauman, Musariri, Siddiqi and Ashraf, Vaughn et al.). Restrictions of physical movement during the Covid-19 pandemic have intensified the use of social media and the internet. This not only contributes to the blurring of the divide between online and offline worlds, it also facilitates new practices of racialized boundary-making and unmaking. The paper by Baumann and Denardi, which investigates how racism and anti-racist counter-movements of ethnic Chinese minorities developed in Argentina before and during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, illustrates this clearly. By studying Argentinian online and social media, the authors show that, in the wake of the pandemic, longstanding anti-Chinese sentiments were reactivated and merged with discriminatory discourses originating in western countries to create new forms of institutional racism. However, this uptick in Sinophobia led to the gradual mobilization of the formerly 'silent' Chinese minority in Argentina, when ethnic Chinese youth in Argentina started to reflect on and speak out against their racialization and stigmatization.

This special issue contributes new knowledge and insights to racial formation during Covid-19 in the Global South. It pushes the readers to contemplate the pluralization of racial meanings in new historical contexts. The papers move beyond the restrictions of specific locations in the Global South and attend to the complex intersections of the global and the local. They also destabilize the binary between racializers and racialized by highlighting the materiality of race as embedded in global capitalism, local state policies aimed at containing Covid-19 and grassroots anti-racism movements (Raghuram 2022). The authors adopt a historical and transnational perspective to show the connections between old racist ideologies and practices originating in the Global North and their re-articulations in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Global South. We understand the Global South not only as a geographical region, but also as a structural conjuncture that offers the possibility to decolonize western knowledge as a universal norm against which other types of knowledge are evaluated and legitimized (J. Kim 2017). This special issue helps raise awareness of the dangers of reproducing the West versus Rest binary in theorizing South-South racialization. Moreover, it highlights the importance of acknowledging both the global circulation of white hegemony and scholarly investment in decolonizing projects that expose the limitations of Western notions of race and racism in defining newly emerged othering experiences during Covid-19 in the Global South.

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Note on the Authors

SHANSHAN LAN is Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Amsterdam. Her research interests include urban anthropology, migration and mobility regimes, comparative racial formations in Asia and Euro-America, transnational student mobility, the African diaspora in China, and class and social transformations in Chinese society. She is the author of two books: *Diaspora and Class Consciousness: Chinese Immigrant Workers in Multiracial Chicago* (2012); and *Mapping the New African Diaspora in China: Race and the Cultural Politics of Belonging* (2017). Email: **s.lan@uva.nl**.

WILLY SIER is an anthropologist and assistant professor at Utrecht University. She focuses on questions of mobility and identity through research on Chinese labour mobility and (gendered) rural–urban dynamics, as well as the construction of racial identities among migrants in China. Willy has (co-)produced several short films, such as ***Empty Home***, ***Happy Weekend in Wuhan*** and ***Shanghai in Lockdown***. Her most recent article was published in *Asian Anthropology*. Email: **w.m.sier@uu.nl**; Twitter: **@WillySier**

ALDINA CAMENISCH is the Administrative Director of the Swiss National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) for migration and mobility studies (University of Neuchâtel). She is particularly interested in the positions of Western migrants in non-Western contexts against current shifts in global power hierarchies and changing processes of racialization. Her most recent article, published in *Ethnicities* in February 2022, explores the shifting positionalities of Europeans in China. Email: **aldina.camenisch@unine.ch;** Twitter: **@ACamenisch**

The 'Colonial Virus': Racialized Narratives During Early Covid-19 in Ghana, South Africa and Kenya*

by Leona Vaughn (University of Liverpool), Allen Kiconco (University of the Witwatersrand), Nii Kwartelai Quartey (James Town Community Theatre), Collins Seymah Smith (James Town Community Theatre) and Isabel Zattu Ziz (Kibabii University)

Abstract

The myth of African or African-descended people being innately resistant to Covid-19 emerged during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic ('early Covid-19') in media narratives originating in China and the Global North. This paper is based on a rapid collaborative research project which explored open-source information from the three African countries of Ghana, Kenya and South Africa to discover if, and if so how, public- and state-generated narratives of risk for preventing Covid-19 infection were influenced by this racialized myth of Black immunity to the virus. The study found that the narratives of perceived levels of the risk of contracting the virus were indeed inherently racialized and that the immunity myth was contained in widely held 'infodemic' narratives about innate African (Black) immunity. Moreover, race was also observed to play a significant role in local pandemic policies, their implementation and their impacts, including in narratives of risk responsibilization. The risk and prevention narratives about the virus, locally monikered as a 'colonial virus', illustrated a paradoxically simultaneous reinforcement of colonial imaginings of biological 'race' and 'blackness' with resistance to them. Analysing these processes of racialization in a specific time and place offers a unique insight into how racialized risk, which is inherently political and works to uphold existing inequalities of power, has impacted on African communities during this pandemic far beyond the initial myth of immunity.

Keywords: racialised risk, Covid-19, misinformation, pandemic, Africa

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic emerged in 2020 as a universal risk to global health. However, closer scrutiny points to the unequal impacts of pandemic policy on populations' health based on geography, social class, ethnicity, disability and gender (Marmot and Allen 2020). The preventative actions and risk narratives that were intended to stem Covid-19 (or coronavirus) infection rates undoubtedly privileged those with certain lifestyles, employment, physical abilities, resources and homes, which permitted them to fully observe the preventative methods and 'social distancing' which became the standard response globally. In the decisions over who could acceptably be over-exposed to the virus and who could be left un- or under-protected from it, the 'disposability' of racialized and minoritized groups within society, especially indigenous and African-descended populations, was made visible (UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent 2020). As civil rights movements globally braved national risks and pandemic restrictions to call for Black[2] lives to matter, racial equality was also argued to be necessary and central to the post-pandemic recovery.

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* This paper is the result of a Covid-19 Official Development Assistance (ODA) Rapid Response research project of the University of Liverpool, undertaken virtually during 'Early Covid' (May to July 2020) in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. The authors are academics and community-based researchers who collaboratively co-designed and co-delivered this research project.

Shortly before categorizing Covid-19 as a global pandemic in March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) acknowledged growing but often unsubstantiated claims about actions which could prevent the virus, or claims about the level of risks it presented to populations in different locations. This caused the pandemic to be called an '*infodemic*',[3] in which an excessive amount of unreliable information about Covid-19 spread rapidly, mainly on social media, creating confusion and distrust. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO's Director-General, claimed that this misinformation was spreading 'faster and more easily than this virus' and as such posed a risk to public health.[4] The WHO's response was a global 'myth-busting' initiative of counter-narratives to undermine specific misleading claims (WHO 2020).

However, this initiative did not identify and address the fact that a significant part of this infodemic, especially about risk and prevention, was deeply racialized. Misinformation, or disinformation, was often based on the eugenicist, racist belief in 'biological race', which it also promulgated (Carter and Sanford III 2020; Kinouani 2020; Saini 2020; Shanks 2020; Sikka, 2020; Sowemimo, 2020).

Race, Racialization and Covid-19 Risk Narratives

One example of the racialized infodemic is the idea that Black people have an immunity to the virus. This first appeared early in the pandemic in Western media coverage, originating with the story of the 'miraculous' recovery of a Cameroonian student in China (Vincent 2020). The influence of this infodemic about Black people's biological resistance to the coronavirus was then spread in US and European popular culture, often in memes or jokes about this being one of the 'few benefits' of being Black in these countries (Kertscher 2020; Reuters Staff 2020; Sowemimo 2020). However, concerns were also raised about the potential impact on perceptions of risk and safety in public health (Laurencin and McClinton 2020). Idris Elba, the Black British celebrity, commented on contracting Covid-19 in March 2020: '[t]here are so many stupid, ridiculous conspiracy theories about Black people not being able to get it [coronavirus]…[and that it] is the quickest way to get more Black people killed' (Elba 2020).

In the Americas and Europe, this myth was indeed soon overshadowed by statistical evidence that, during early Covid-19, Black and other racialized and minoritized people were actually *more likely* to die of the virus than their White counterparts (CDC 2021; European Network against Racism 2020; United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent 2020). However, the racialization of the virus in discussions of risk did not disappear. Claims about Black and other racialized and minoritized groups, particularly in the US, UK and Brazil, and their 'innate' *susceptibility* to the novel virus ensued (Haque 2020; Khan 2020; Phan 2021; Sikka 2020). Simultaneously, debates continued to consider why the African continent had not seen the high death rates that were initially expected (*France 24* 2020; Hairsine 2020), which further invigorated talk of the biological resistance of Black people in Africa (Lawal 2021; Sikka 2020; Winning 2020). In this divergent discourse on race and Covid-19, of biological immunity and susceptibility across the Black diaspora, a common ground was nevertheless revealed in the form of ‘bio-essentialism’ (Sikka 2020), in which perceived differences and inequalities in rates of infection and deaths were seen as explainable only in biological terms related to race.

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[2] This term is used throughout the paper to indicate people of African descent.

[3] Infodemic is defined as 'a blend of "information" and "epidemic" that typically refers to a rapid and far-reaching spread of both accurate and inaccurate information about something, such as a disease. As facts, rumours [sic] and fears mix and disperse, it becomes difficult to learn essential information about an issue.' Merriam-Webster 'Words We're Watching: Infodemic'. Available at: **https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/words-were-watching-infodemic-meaning#:~:text=Infodemic%20is%20a%20blend%20of,something%2C%20such%20as%20a%20disease**

[4] Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, at a gathering of foreign policy and security experts in Munich, Germany, 2020.

In this paper, ‘race‘, and associated words like ‘Black‘ and ‘White‘ are treated as socially constructed categories with no biological basis for differentiation (Crenshaw 1991; Murji and Solomos 2005). ‘Racialization‘ refers to the social and cultural processes which give socially imagined ideas about ‘race‘ a real-world meaning (Du Bois 1994; Fanon, 2008 [1952]; Gilroy 1993; Murji and Solomos 2005). Processes of racialization are also understood here as multiple ways of exerting power or control – both individually and by the hegemonic force of the state – to sort, rank, define and categorize those who are ‘us‘ and those who are ‘other‘ (Said 1978). Issues of race appeared early in narratives about the unfolding pandemic.

Racialized public discourses about China being where the virus originated are well recorded (Phan 2021), as is the subsequent increase in racist attacks and harassment of people racialized as Chinese (Fekete 2020; Phan 2021; Yeh 2020). Racialized perceptions of who is ‘the cause’ of a virus – usually a particular population, ethnic or national group – strongly echo the past pandemic and epidemic stigmatization of groups in recent times, for example, in relation to HIV and the Ebola virus (Nunes 2016; Shelley-Egan and Dratwa 2019).

In this paper, the combined impact of racialization and notions of risk – racialized risk – within Covid-19 pandemic narratives, particular in relation to African-descended people and the African continent, is framed from the outset as a ‘colonial’ project. This approach provides an analytical frame for all narratives of risk and race, which takes into account the dynamics of power, both historical and contemporary, and their influence. This is done not only to progress ‘anticolonial’ or liberatory ways of knowing, but also as a way of addressing epistemic injustices against indigenous knowledge (Mbembe 2015; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; Smith, 2012; Tamale 2020).

The concepts and processes of racialization as described above, combined with the categorization and attribution of risk, risk levels and risky bodies in society (Benton 2016; Heath-Kelly 2017; Vaughn 2019), are colonial in multiple ways, in their histories and relationships to eugenicist theories (Bonds 2018), as well as in their role in the mutual reinforcement of unequal power relations in society (Olofsson et al. 2014).

Racialized risk is conceptually important in the maintenance of global racist power structures and belief systems. In the ‘colonial global economy‘ (Bhambra 2020), structural inequalities in relation to racism and ‘development’ are deep and persistent (Benton 2016; Kothari 2006). Coloniality can be observed in social interactions in economic or financial assessments of risk and decision-making (Bonds 2018; Dannreuthers and Kessler 2017), or, as observed on the macro-level, within the nature of the exploitative ‘risk’ of economic and environmental relationships between the Global North and the Global South (Hesse 2007; Mignolo 2011; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Quijano 2000).

The attribution of the ‘risk‘ label and the perception of who is ‘risky’ favors the behavioural and cultural norms of the powerful over those of the marginalized. As Bonds remarks, risk is always a colonial and racialized concept because ‘[t]he construction of permanent risk is always already enmeshed within social relations that have long marked the racialized “other” as a proxy for danger and risk’ (Bonds 2018: 1288).

In this paper, the ‘coloniality’ of the Covid-19 virus is observed while under construction, providing insights into racialized risks that are specific to both time (‚early Covid‘) and place (Ghana, Kenya and South Africa). The data collected from open-source and other publicly available information demonstrates how inaccurate notions of biological race relating both to perceptions of African immunity and of riskiness, are being re-inscribed even within Black majority countries during the pandemic.

The existing literature on racialization is observed as mainly having been written from a position which centres experiences in, and relationships with, Black populations *outside* the African continent (Barot and Bird 2001; Pierre 2012). Pivoting much of our global knowledge of this phenomenon on this Western-centric perspective creates the hazard of what Ndlovu-Gatsheni refers to as a form of postcolonial, epistemic 'arrogance' (2021). For example, studies of race and the interrelation with colonial power by African scholars have often been sectioned off as 'area' studies (see Mbembe 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; Nkrumah 1970; Nnameka 2008; Pierre 2012; wa Thiong'o 1986).

The knowledge gap in our understanding of racialization processes in Black majority countries and how this differs across the diaspora generally (Pierre 2012) is acknowledged in this paper, as is the same gap in relation to research about the Covid-19 pandemic. This research project intentionally designed a study to explore manifestations of 'race', with its deep roots in colonialism and slavery, in relation to how it appeared within contemporary media and policy narratives about Covid-19 risks in majority Black African countries. It thus offers a unique contribution of knowledge to begin to address this ellipsis.

Research Methods

Sylvia Tamale instructs us that '[i]t takes conscious unlearning and relearning to "shake off" the colonial filters through which we view the world' (2020: 58). The active unlearning of imperial power relations was therefore essential to this UK-led research inquiry into the phenomena of racialized risk in the chosen African countries. The research team, four out of five of whom are African and based in the countries studied, consciously made efforts to uncover local knowledge by engaging with multiple forms of narrative data. The team also consciously considered the coloniality of different research theories and tools (Nhemachena et al., 2016; Omanga and Mainye 2019; Smith 2012). This aspect was intentionally addressed by academic and non-academic researchers co-designing the research and its schedule, co-creating and determining the methods of data collection (e.g. search terms), collaboratively choosing tools and literature for analysis, and jointly developing methods for dissemination.

Being undertaken during the 'early Covid' lockdown with local research partners at a time when much overseas development research was being paused and eventually cancelled (Buse and Hawkes 2021), this research project created otherwise reductive avenues in order to centre Africa, African researchers and their communities as authorities of their own experiences and worlds at this unprecedented time. An important layer of the understanding of racialization during Covid-19 within the Black-majority, post-colonial African countries of Ghana, Kenya and South Africa has been acquired by taking this approach to research.

Data Collection

The aim of the research was to gather data reflecting policy, the media and public Covid-19 risk narratives across the three African countries, to analyse if, and if so how, they were influenced by the Black immunity myth, and to examine how misinformation about the disease had been racialized. Kenya and South Africa were identified as sites for research because their government officials made statements about the immunity myth. Ghana, where no such statements had been made, was chosen as a comparator.

South Africa, Kenya and Ghana all recorded their first cases of coronavirus in March 2020. During the period of the research, Kenya reported 5,206 cases and 130 deaths, Ghana 35,501 cases and 182 deaths, and South Africa 493,183 cases and 8,005 deaths. Open-source, publicly available information about risk in these countries was our primary data source. This was a necessity in research being undertaken virtually, but also social media especially were a recognized outlet allowing populations to communicate with others who were largely under strict 'stay at home' or 'shelter in place' orders.

Two hundred and forty-six (246) examples of racialized narratives about the risk and prevention of Covid-19 infection were gathered in the three countries between May and July 2020. Data were mainly gathered from social media (Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp), as well as from local newspapers, the radio and government- and state-issued narratives. The data mainly took the forms of written and spoken media discourses in newspapers, speeches, interviews, web content, social media posts, videos and films. The non-text narratives were gathered from visual representations in photographs, cartoons and memes. In response to the different ways in which narratives were manifested in local communities, the data were also widened to include social commentary, music and jokes shared on YouTube and performed locally.

At the beginning of the research, the researchers paid attention to the occurrence of certain words or phrases in their respective contexts, which were then used as search words or phrases for relevant communications. This supported the identification of local news and government publications and was applied to social media search engines.

From preliminary reading, researchers noted that two main descriptions of the virus were used in the communications: 'Covid-19' and 'coronavirus'. While Covid-19 was commonly used in mainstream communications, including government documents and media, , 'coronavirus' or 'corona' were popularly used for informal or personal communications, particularly on social media and in communities. This term was therefore the main search term used on social media platforms.

The researchers created and determined search terms for the data collection to include the continent, the country and Covid-19/coronavirus. These were *'ethnicity'; 'race'; 'racial origin of'; 'melanin'; 'Black immunity'; 'immunity'; 'inequality'; 'foreigners'; 'Chinese'; 'stigma'; 'racism'; 'internalised racism'; 'vaccine'; 'cure'; 'Madagascar cure'* and *'minority'*. In Ghana, an additional search was undertaken of '*Social Media Videos of Covid-19 in West Africa*'.

Analysis

The processes of the identification of racialization in the messaging and actions to prevent infection, including social distancing, curfews, lockdowns and other preventative measures, drew upon two key methodologies for analysis – content analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Content analysis is a set of techniques for analysing collections of communications: 'who says what through which channel to whom with what effect' (Lasswell 1948: 117). It is a method of collecting and analysing data to understand the meanings ascribed to an issue within a given context (Krippendorf 1989: 403). CDA is defined as 'a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take [an] explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality' (Van Dijk 2001: 352). Drawing upon both methodologies allows power and discrimination (racialization) in communications to be identified (Baker et al. 2013; Van Dijk 2001).

During this process, researchers collaborated in the analysis of identified information to create a consistent approach across the team. This involved sharing reflections on the identified messages, purposes and intended effects of the communication, which also entailed making inferences about the producers of the information, the communicators and the intended audience. Researchers were then able to identify and examine patterns in the data in a replicable and systematic manner. Country-specific and context-specific data analysis was still maintained with individual published reports authored by each researcher and research team (Kiconco 2020; Smith and Quartey 2020; Ziz 2020) but it is the collectively analysed patterns and themes across the countries that are represented and discussed from herein.

Findings

Blackness, Covid-19 Immunity and Susceptibility

The false promise of immunity for people with Black skins was dismissed in high-profile statements by the Kenyan Secretary of Health Mutahi Kagwe and South Africa‘s Professor Thumbi Ndung‘u of Durban‘s School of Medicine (BBC News 2020). This indicated that the myth might be gaining purchase in parts of the African continent (Kazeem 2020; Nebe 2020), but the potential impact on the beliefs and actions taken for purposes of local Covid-19 risk prevention and management was unknown. As it is important to acknowledge the wider racialized narratives, the research observed multiple aspects of the discourse on Covid-19 risks and preventative actions. However, the research also focuses on the interaction of the myth of Black immunity with racialized misinformation about who was viewed as ‘responsible‘ for the outbreak of the virus and how it was being spread, which demonstrated a fostering of mistrust and resentment between differently racialized communities.

The immunity myth appeared to have had an influence on the public and political narratives of the risks of Covid-19 in all three countries, in both provoking action to actively undermine this misinformation and in narratives supporting this fiction. The narratives, which were deeply racialized and shaped by [residual] colonial logics, manifested themselves in socially, culturally and historically specific ways. As Ochonu recognizes in their work on race in Africa, ‘race and its meanings, residues, appropriations, subconscious reproductions, and disguises are diffused in society through subtle and not-so-subtle gestures, attitudes, and informal rules of social relations’ (Ochonu 2019: 28).

Analysis of the data nevertheless indicated a number of common racializing themes for Covid-19 risk narratives across the three countries. These include perceptions of the racialized ‘other’ who threatens ‘us’ with exposure to the virus, categorizations of those racialized others who can be blamed, responsibilized and stigmatized for increased risks of infection, the influence of colonial logics in relation to race and power, and the desire to believe in Black advantage. Although these themes are interconnected and interdependent, the remainder of this paper focuses on the latter two themes in detail.

The ‘Colonial Virus’: Power and Racialization

Racialized narratives further appeared in wider discourses on Covid-19 risks and preventative actions, demonstrating how the interaction of the Black immunity myth with racialized narratives about who was ‘responsible‘ for the outbreak of the virus and how it was being spread shaped narratives of mistrust and resentment between racialized communities. A popular video circulating on social media (WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter) showed a Black West African woman being interviewed about the virus, either shopping or working in a local market. In the video, other people are seen laughing and repeating what the woman is saying to the journalist. This was a clip from the news, selected from other clips, and circulated on social media. In her response, she referred to coronavirus as the ‘colonial virus‘:

> *Interviewer: ‘What is the name of the virus that is killing people all over the world’?*
>
> *Interviewee:* ‘[English translation] *I don‘t hear English well. Colo, Colonial virus. Because that sickness is not from us, came from different place and should stay where it came from‘.*[5]

The woman‘s use of the term ‘colonial virus‘ suggests two potential racialized meanings. One is that the virus was introduced to Africa by colonial or neo-colonial powers. The other is that locally imposed pandemic policies and practices were colonial in nature. Both are expanded upon from this point. Local populations perceived coronavirus as having been brought to their own countries by those with identities seen as representative of or related to previous or current colonial or neo-colonial powers. Country-specific economic relations, new and longstanding, with other African countries, with European nations and especially with China (Human Rights Watch 2020), definitely influenced how the narratives of risk were racialized and how stigma manifested itself (Slovic 2001). Covid-19 was seen as a risk that the rest of the world was posing to Africa, an exogenous threat, a ‘them‘ virus. This was especially made visible in the use of the Twitter hashtag #CloseBordersNow.

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[5] This now popular term was specifically communicated in this video interview circulating on social media **https://twitter.com/Browntykilla/status/1251931493993152512?s=20**

To bring a further nuance to this process of racialization, the virus was also referred to in public and political narratives as being brought in by ‘outsiders‘, ‘foreigners‘, ‘tourists‘, ‘travellers‘ or ‘diplomats‘. This is illustrated by these lyrics from a social commentary song in Ghana:

> *Am3 k3 hela eba maamli eei, Ats3) l3 Coronavirus, Eshishi ji, Koloo y3 olamli.*
>
> [Translated into English: *‘They have brought the disease into the country, its name is coronavirus, which means, there is an animal in the blood’]*
> (Kane Group, Teshi – Accra).

This form of ‘othering‘ was applied to all those who were perceived to be the source of the risk of the spread of infection. However, the terms ‘tourists’, ‘travellers’ and ‘diplomats’ in Ghana and Kenya were mainly reserved for White Europeans or Euro-Americans, but also used to indicate that they were people of high socio-economic status and, therefore, unlikely to be Black Africans. In South Africa, undoubtedly shaped by its history of apartheid, these terms implied Afrikaners and other White South Africans. Across all three countries, the terms ‘outsiders‘ and ‘foreigners‘ were used to signal other Africans (migrants) or Chinese people (York 2020; Musariri, this SI). It is important to acknowledge here that at that time media coverage was showing African people being discriminatorily refused help and subjected to unfair enforced lockdowns in China or eviction from the country (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

In South Africa, the Twitter hashtag #whites and #coronavirusinSA trended as Black South Africans took to social media to blame White people for bringing the virus home from their travels. Politicians added their voices to these claims, with Julius Malema, the leader of Economic Freedom Fighters, calling on the government to ban all travel to Europe and quarantine those (White) people who were infected with coronavirus on Robben Island. In Ghana, social media posts reacted angrily to media references to ‘Very Important People‘ (VIP) cases of infection, including local and international elites and ‘diplomats‘. When the number of cases reached 195 in the country, the Health Minister, Kwaku Agyeman Manu, stated that VIP patients were to be treated at the Bank of Ghana hospital. He stated, ‘Let me say that the Bank of Ghana health facility is not under the entire control of the government. We had to go into an agreement with them, and the bank has agreed, in addition to their own staff, to have VIP people at their facility’ (Pulse.Com Interview 2020).

This ‘positive’ stigma given to affluent people, mainly White people or ‘foreigners’, was that they were the only people with the means to travel and contract the virus. They were also viewed as being to blame for its spread. This lends itself to the other interpretation of the term ‘colonial virus‘. It indicates that in all three countries the pandemic, and the state’s responses to it, were viewed by local populations as an extension of the former colonisers‘ colonialist thinking. The Fanonian perspective on colonization was that it not only colonized the physical, but also the mental and spiritual being. In doing so, the processes of colonization made the colonized complicit in their own oppression, thus enabling a ‘colonial psyche‘ to be established which did not necessitate a physical colonizing presence (Fanon 2008 [1952]).

In South Africa, pandemic responses were referred to in social media narratives as indicative of the apartheid-era or other colonial hangover. Some people in these countries took to social media to criticize how ‘white’ technologies were being prioritized over potential locally produced technologies when considering clinical and pharmacological interventions. In treating their indigenous populations through, for example, policing, and undermining local knowledge systems, including natural medicines, therapies and the role of spirituality or faith, as unscientific or parochial, instead they held other (mostly Western) expertise in higher esteem (Quijano 2000; Tamale 2020; wa Thiong'o 1986). The widespread disparagement of local 'treatments' or potential 'cures', especially as promoted by Madagascar and Tanzania, and now being scientifically investigated by the WHO (WHO 2020a), was viewed in public narratives as instances of the dismissal of local knowledge by government officials. Two Twitter users posted as follows:

> *The Black mind has a problem. Madagascar claimed to have a cure to COVID19 but fellow African men told them to shutup (sic) their primitive ass but here we go with Oxford clinical trial and we all accept because we believe they are superior to us. Free your Black soul from racism* (27 June 2020).

> *Our own problems, sometimes we don't believe in ourselves, we see Western people as gods who we see. Madagascar produces a cure… but the pretentiousness with which Western countries with their armies of scientists, PhDs etc. welcomed this potential cure reeks of colonialism and racism* (26 April 2020).

Perceptions of privilege on the basis of race and class (Pierre 2012) were acutely present across public and political narratives of the lockdown measures in all three countries, where poverty and social and physical stratification in the forms of wealth, housing enclaves and spatial ethnic concentration are common societal characteristics (Nnameka 2008; Villet 2018). Risk prevention in these types of narrative was communicated as focused on protecting the people in the city's suburbs, who were by implication affluent Black Africans and White people, as opposed to actions to protect those Black Africans living in the impoverished rural areas or in informal settlements or 'slum' neighbourhoods (Shoki 2020). This echoed the much-criticized recent responses to Ebola in African countries that prioritized health interventions for the privileged and militarized interventions for the poor (Benton 2017; Hirsch 2021).

One Kenyan development consultant argued that the Kenyan government emphasised the importance of individual action to contain the Covid-19 epidemic in the country, downplaying the socio-economic realities of the major cities where most infections were located. He stated, 'While for some the flouting of guidelines may be chosen, there are many more who simply are unable to follow the rules due to the nature of their workplace and space; their economic and social needs make adherence impossible'. The expert warned that the government's approach and guidelines for preventing the spread of the virus could have wide impacts on health and the economy (Njue 2020).

Specific criticisms of state action, or inaction, were observed in narratives on specific topics. The instructions to local populations to follow social distancing and 'stay at home' were critiqued as Eurocentric and non-translatable in the local context, thereby giving an unfair advantage to Whites and the wealthy. One Ghanaian artist reflected on the realities of survival in a thought-provoking blog post, which was widely shared on social media. He lamented:

> *You live in a multi-bedroom home with over one hundred meters square of walled compound around you…Your kitchen is fitted with huge freezers and fridges all stocked with more than six months supply of food and drinks of various kinds… Do you know what home is to me? Do you have the slightest idea how it feels to stay locked up within those four bare walls of space smaller than a fifth of your car garage? With a single window that opens over a putrid and stagnant neighbourhood drain? Can you show me how to stay locked in when my front door opens directly onto a busy pedestrian pavement beside a highway? Do I keep it shut and suffocate in that prickly and putrid air within those walls or do I open it and expose my shame and embarrassment to passers-by?* (Mills 2020).

Local government and media narratives about people described as 'selfishly' or 'recklessly' flouting pandemic rules were notable in our analysis, being applied exclusively to the young and the poor, who were invariably Black Africans.

The brutal enforcement of pandemic policies by the police and military powers – for example, of mask-wearing, curfews and ‘stay home‘ orders – were extensively covered in social media and mainstream media videos and reports, as in the graphic below. Public discourse about how risk was managed in all three countries communicated it as militarized or state violence that was inherently racialized and classed (Benton 2017; Hirsch 2021).

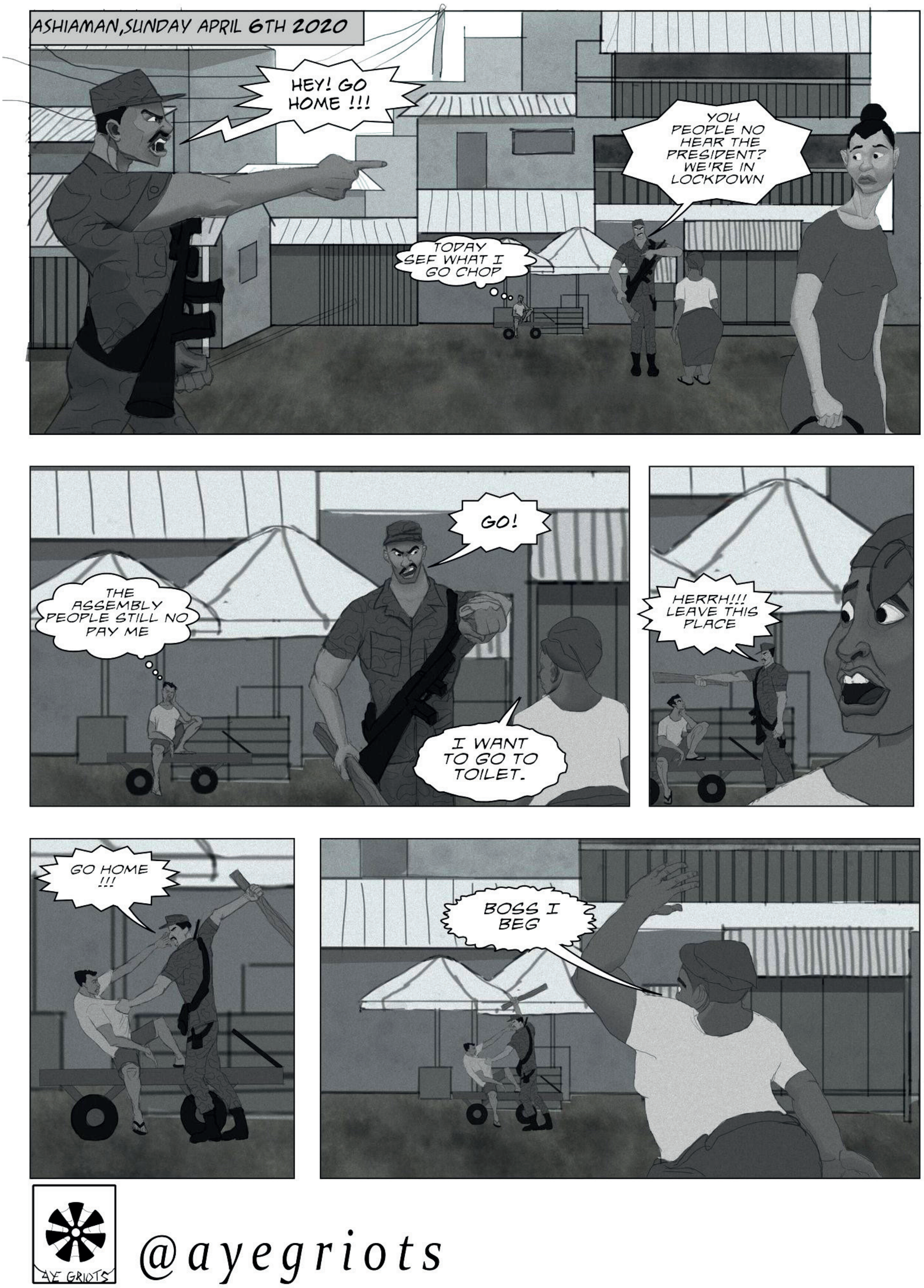
ASHIAMAN, SUNDAY APRIL 6TH 2020
HEY! GO HOME !!!
YOU PEOPLE NO HEAR THE PRESIDENT? WE'RE IN LOCKDOWN
TODAY SEE WHAT I GO CHOP
THE ASSEMBLY PEOPLE STILL NO PAY ME
GO!
I WANT TO GO TO TOILET.
HERRH!!! LEAVE THIS PLACE
GO HOME !!!
BOSS I BEG
AYE GRIOTS
@ayegriots

Figure 1*:* WhatsApp graphic (source unknown, 6 April 2020).

The figure above depicts the killing of a civilian by a military officer in the Ashiaman area of Accra, Ghana, an informal settlement where some people sleep where they work, at the start of the first lockdown. In both Kenya and South Africa too, within the first days of the lockdown, both mainstream and social media were awash with images of police brutality. During the first ten days of Kenya‘s dusk-to-dawn curfew, at least six people were killed by police, including thirteen-year-old Yassin Hussein Moyo, shot dead while standing on the balcony of their home watching the police enforce the curfew in Kiamaiko, one of Nairobi‘s informal settlements (*Daily Nation* 2020; Human Rights Watch 2020). In South Africa, reports and videos emerged of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) using violence to keep Black Africans inside their homes, at the same time as a viral video showed a White neighbourhood enjoying a *braai* (barbeque).[6] Social media references to racial injustice were acutely obvious in South African commentaries. Consider these two South African Twitter posts:

> *I will never forgive the ANC government, Cyril Ramaphosa, SANDF, and SAPS for abusing the people during this lockdown, kicking and killing us, while whites were having a braai, and not a single one of them touched. I will never* (11 April 2020).
>
> *I guess that colonial mind-control from apartheid era still works wonders. SANDF and SAPS are sacred [sic ‘scared’] to take action against whites but apply full force when it comes to Africans* (10 April 2020).

The diverse legacies of colonization and colonialism across these African countries that can be discerned in the built environment (Nnameka, 2008), as well as the infrastructure, institutions and logics of decision-making, cannot be ignored in the processes of racialization in the risk narratives for Covid-19. Specifically, the colonial monument of biological or scientific ‘race‘ appears in pandemic narratives as an internalized belief in immutable fact.

Racialized Infodemic: ‘Positive’ Self-Racialization?

The research showed that, in the absence of locally available and reliable facts about Covid-19 at the early stage of the pandemic, populations created their own information, which encompassed what they imagined the risk of infection to be, where the risk was perceived to come from, who was viewed as the source of the risk and what actions would help prevent the risk. All of these invariably drew upon established racialized narratives of risk, informing and constructing the social boundaries of who is the ‘us‘ who were at risk and who is the ‘other‘ who was posing a risk, as previously described.

The phenomenon of accepting ‘self-othering‘ or self-racialization, claiming bio-essentialist theories as positive characteristics of Black Africans, was an aspect of creating the boundaries of ‘us’:

> *Our Melanin is Our Defence. Senou is a young Cameroonian student in China…Chinese doctors have confirmed that he remained alive because he has black skin. The antibodies of a black are three times [as] strong, powerful and resistant than that of a white…the black man is indestructible….* (Ghana Facebook User, 11 February 2020).

This form of positive self-racialization was prolific in individual Black African narratives about the ‘natural’ biological resistance of Black Africans to Covid-19.

The process of ‘othering’ is usually a dynamic of power wherein the powerful ‘other’ stigmatizes and excludes those with less power. Yet in the above example, as in a number of others, we saw the dynamic of the ‘othered’ group ‘othering’ themselves. This gives an insight into how what Du Bois termed the ‘double consciousness‘ of Black people can affect Black Africans when they view themselves, consciously or subconsciously, in relation to Whiteness (Du Bois 1903/1994; Gilroy 1993). The examples we gathered showed the regularity of this duality of seeing one’s self independently and also viewing one’s self through the lens of others. In the example above, the latter occurs through Black Africans adopting ‘scientific’ racism beliefs about themselves, including the stereotypes of the innate physical strength of Black people, beliefs which came to prevalence during African enslavement.

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[6] See video **https://twitter.com/ChabaNagi/status/1244336535132155904**

The myth of the biological immunity of Black people underpinned much of the racialized infodemic, specifically promoting the belief that Africans had a reduced risk of infection. ‘Double consciousness’ cannot explain all the phenomena here, as there is no way to know the origins of the mass information circulating on social media, especially Black immunity jokes and memes.

This research project collated evidence, especially in South Africa, of a number of public, medical and political statements that sought explicitly to undermine the immunity myth (Everatt 2020; Hermans 2020). However, these statements were outnumbered by examples of public and social media narratives that operated in support of the fiction that Black Africans were unable to succumb to the virus. One such example is this headline from an online news outlet which presents itself as African news, implying that the myth has been scientifically proven: ‘Chinese Doctors Confirmed African Blood Genetic Composition Resists Coronavirus After Student Cured’ (Cityscrollz.com, 15 February 2020). This article was retweeted and shared by social media users in all countries, but it is located on a web server in Los Angeles, USA.

Beyond the immunity myth, racialized myths and misinformation on Covid-19 risks, prevention, treatment and cures were both explicit and implicit in social media posts, memes or jokes and messaging in public, political and religious leaders’ narratives. The explicit racialization was observed in the use of racial categories to signify who was believed to be least at risk of infection (*immunity to Covid-19*), as well as who was believed to be more at risk of infection (*susceptibility to Covid-19*) and who was perceived as presenting the most risk to others, i.e. those viewed as ‘spreaders‘ of infection. For example, in these three quotes, explicit racialization is demonstrated in which Africans are ‘positively‘ racialized as innately immune, and indeed as stereotypically magical, while White people are claimed to be more likely to fall ill, and Chinese people are negatively stigmatized as ‘spreading‘ the virus:

> *I don‘t know what magic Africans have used… we host the Chinese citizens in huge numbers… I‘m starting to think we are immune to that virus* (Kenya Twitter User, 13 March 2020).
>
> *Does Uhuru [Kenyan President] love this country? Because if he did, no Chinese flight would be allowed to land in Kenya* (Boniface Mwangi, Interview with Anadolu Agency, 28 February 2020).
>
> *Dear blacks, don‘t panic. It‘s white people affected. If there was a black person we‘d be knowing his underwear size too, but because it‘s white people, they hide their profiles and locations. Worry not, dark ones.* (South Africa Twitter user, 14 March 2020).

Implicitly racialized misinformation appeared mainly in the form of the ‘misinformation’ identified by the WHO. This claimed that hot climates or exposure to sunshine meant that the risk of being infected with coronavirus was reduced, and that eating specific foods would ward it off. These were adopted and adapted within popular notions in all three countries. Firstly, there was the notion that traditional deities and prayer would prevent Black Africans from being affected by the virus.[7] In Ghana, Dr Daniel Asare, the Chief Executive Officer of Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital, stated in an interview on GhanaWeb: ‘We‘re very lucky as a country because of the high temperatures [thus] it will be very difficult for the virus to spread. God has blessed us with this sun and the period of harmattan. Coronavirus cannot enter. Viruses don‘t thrive well under the scorching sun’ (6 February 2020). Locally, the idea sprang up that Black African cultural diets, combined with natural strength, would support resistance to infection, such as the Kenyan Twitter user who posted: ‘Black don‘t crack. Corona is just a little flu to our immune systems. Kenyans, let’s get back to indigenous foods’ (13 March 2020).

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[7] ‘*Ga* traditional leaders perform rites to drive away Covid-19’. Available at: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heTRzRedWOk**

The lack of official information being provided on the virus in South Africa, especially about ethnicity, often created the impression that those ‘affected‘ by the virus were not Black Africans, thereby reinforcing the myth of immunity (Schmidt et al. 2020). This Tweet is an example of a response to another user who posted about the immunity myth: ‘You do realize the virus can infect anyone. Just because it will take longer for the symptoms to show in black people and it‘s easier to be treated, this doesn‘t mean we must be careless because we‘re black’ (14 March 2020). The Twitter user seeks to correct the original post by saying that the virus ‘can infect anyone‘, but then goes on to make two unsubstantiated but popular claims of their own about Black people and the virus in additional tweets: first, the claim that the virus symptoms take longer to show in Black people; and second, the claim that it is easier to treat the virus in Black people.

In this example, both users indicate that they are Black South Africans and yet reproduce anti-Black racism (van Dijk, 1992) by reinforcing false ideas relating to Black biological resistance to Covid-19. This was a trend within the data we acquired which spoke to the phenomena of ‘positive’ self-racialization. In full acknowledgement of the detrimental impact of reductionist, racialized thinking, this trend can also be interpreted through an Afrocentric lens (Mazama 2001) as an understandable desire to believe that Black Africans have an advantage during the pandemic.

This Kenyan Twitter post encompasses this interpretation, indicating that African commentators knew Black people were not immune but embraced the myth in an attempt to stay positive as the pandemic unfolded: ‘Africans bragging about being immune to coronavirus doesn‘t necessarily mean we are oblivious of the fact that we can actually get it. We know we can and are taking the necessary precautions. That‘s just us trying to stay positive and free of fear, so just play along’ (13 March 2020).

Mythical narratives of immunity nevertheless drew upon a number of cultural touchstones. Spiritual beliefs were often expressed within tropes about Black Africans’ ‘innate’ relationship to nature. Religious belief was often linked to fervent displays of worship (Christianity) and connected to indigenous belief systems. Popular characterizations of Black people depicted them as having ‘magical‘ properties, such as visual memes drawing on the *Marvel* comics and the film *Black Panther*.

In such an unequal world, the perceived advantages of the resistance and resilience that increased melanin was proposed to offer – in particular over so-called developed nations and thus over White people – was regularly embraced in both public and political narratives. Not wanting to be seen as a victim and inferior is understandably attractive to any individual or group who regularly experience discrimination and oppression. The popularity observed of narratives of innate [Black] African strength and resilience to the virus is likely a response to the relentless pressure of global anti-Black racism, heightened by the increased visibility, especially on social media, of police brutality and the call for Black Lives to Matter.

Nevertheless, however positively the intention of their use, the fact that the racialized infodemic narratives problematically see ‘race‘ as biological, with many of the notions being direct derivatives of slavery-era, colonial and eugenicist ideas, cannot be ignored (Carter and Sanford III 2020; Saini 2020; Sowemimo 2020). This reflects Ochonu’s conclusions on race in African contexts, that ‘[r]acial anxieties and codes hover ubiquitously and ambiguously over many social transactions, structuring behaviours and ways of seeing, being, thinking, and acting, and producing quotidian lexicons and popular social epistemologies’ (Ochonu 2019: 29).

Conclusion

This collaborative qualitative research examined how the particular myth that Black people are immune to Covid-19 impacted on the narratives of risk in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. It has led us to an understanding of how misinformation about the disease was racialized both officially and by the local populations themselves. Insights are provided into how the mythical idea of Black immunity to the virus, instigated outside of Africa, was combined with longstanding beliefs within these three African countries in colonial racial categorizations. In some places, this breathed life into the notion that the coronavirus would not, or should not, affect Black Africans based on their natural, biological resistance. This notion was directly observed in government, media and public risk-prevention narratives, which consequently impacted on the 'othering' processes that were intrinsic in the assumption that Covid-19 was a virus of 'foreign outsiders'. Yet the rising figures for infections and deaths during the time of the research and beyond showed this to not be the case.

The racialization of risk and blame or responsibilization narratives fostered distrust and resentment between racialized communities. When cases began to emerge and these countries put in place their pandemic policies, the state, media and public narratives demonstrated a different form of inherently racialized social boundary-making for those perceived as 'us' and as 'other'. Emerging in diverse ways in different countries, they were nonetheless strikingly similar in showing how class and race intersected to the detriment of Black Africans. Collectively, the findings demonstrate the colonial legacy that sutures and sustains relationships in these countries along the lines of geography, space, race and class (Hirsch 2021; Pierre 2012). As Hirsch states in a paper on Ebola and risk responses: 'an approach drawing on Black studies and geographies has the potential to unearth racial and postcolonial inequalities inherent in the spatial organisation' (Hirsch 2021: 6).

The processes of racialization which manifest themselves in the narratives about Covid-19 risk prevention give credence to use of the colloquial term 'colonial virus'. Narratives essentialized race and endorsed race-based assumptions about the self and others in ways that chime with what Hesse calls 'onto-coloniality': 'a distinctively modern colonial, social reality… brought into racialised being by colonial regimes of demarcations, designations and deployments' (Hesse 2007: 658). The virus has revealed a new, more modern form of colonialism.

Our findings suggest that colonialism and coloniality continue to scar human relations in all three countries in discussions of race, especially of Blackness (Pierre 2012). 'Scientific racism' and eugenicist beliefs appear to be as strongly influential in these countries as within the places where these flawed theories originated. This underlines how commanding notions of race and the processes of racialization still continue to operate as powerful, false explainers of human difference, especially in relation to health, and even in Black-majority countries.

The understanding of processes of racialization within the African continent, broadly and specifically during the pandemic, are still under-researched. This is important when considering the debates being led in the Global North, but affecting the Global South, about Covid-19 risks, prevention and race. The debates are heavily influenced by pseudo-scientific ideas of 'race' when they are essentially asking *'What is it about Black people that makes them more susceptible or more immune to Covid-19?'.*

Perhaps, with more research from an Afrocentric perspective across the African diaspora, the question can be reframed as *'What is it about racism that is putting Black people around the world at greater risk during this pandemic?'.*

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Note on the Authors

LEONA VAUGHN is Honorary Fellow for Slavery and Unfree Labour Research at the University of Liverpool and, since 2021, has been the Vulnerable Populations Lead for the Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) initiative within the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research. Leona is a sociologist with over 25 years of experience working as an equalities and social justice expert. Email: **leona.vaughn@liverpool.ac.uk**

ALLEN KICONCO holds a PhD in African Studies from the University of Birmingham. Allen is a leading international scholar in the field of modern slavery, with specific expertise on gender and gender-based violence in East and West Africa. Allen was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa in 2017-2021 and is the author of *Gender, Conflict and Reintegration in Uganda: Abducted Girls, Returning Women* (Routledge, 2021). Email: **kiconcoaa@gmail.com**

NII KWARTELAI QUARTEY holds an MPhil in African Studies. Nii is an experienced qualitative multi-lingual researcher, particularly in using arts-based methodologies to explore and map the realities of modern slavery in James Town (Accra). He has worked with the University of Ghana, University of West of Scotland and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Nii has been Principal and Co-Investigator on numerous projects, exploring Safeguarding and Hidden Stories of Modern Slavery in James Town. Email: **niikwartelai79@gmail.com**

COLLINS SEYMAH SMITH is a Theatre Director and Researcher leading and managing all community outreach education programmes across Accra. As a Community Development advocate, he has coordinated a series of behaviour change workshops focused on gender-based violence in communities using interactive theatre. An experienced project coordinator and monitoring officer, he is adept at collating monitoring and reporting data. He is fluent in English and a number of local languages. Email: **seysmith80@gmail.com**

ISABEL ZATTU ZIZ is a Senior Media Technician at Kibabii University whose work entails training students in media practical courses. She holds a BSc and an MSc in Communication Studies. She has vast experience in the area of community communication and media practice. She worked as a media technician at Rongo University and as a photographer/videographer at media Mashariki for seven years. Isabel is also a budding researcher and author. Email: **zattuziz@gmail.com**

Buyel' ekhaya (Go back home): Xenophobia against Black African Migrants during the Covid-19 Lockdown in South Africa

by LINDA MUSARIRI (University of Witwatersrand)

Abstract

Following the countrywide Covid-19 lockdown that brought the South African economy to a standstill, the government rolled out cash-based food relief projects to provide relief to impoverished individuals and communities. Competition over scarce resources intensified the 'othering' of non-South Africans as protests broke out. Some South Africans demanded that the government needed to 'put South Africa first'. This paper examines how the outbreak of Covid-19 provides a historical conjuncture that brings together multiple forms of racialization (including racialization, post-apartheid nationalism and xenophobia). I explore the racialized margins of nationalism and citizenship that manifested during the pandemic and relate them to the racialization of black South Africans in apartheid South Africa. I argue that the pandemic served as a crucible in which long-standing anti-immigrant state policies and sentiments by some subordinated populations found expression and legitimacy, leading to black migrants from specific African countries being targeted. I therefore propose an understanding of xenophobia against black African migrants in South Africa as a new form of racialization based not on phenotypical difference, but on the intersection of class, nationality and immigration status.

Keywords: xenophobia, migration, racialization, Covid-19, South Africa

> '*We want to put it on record that the government needs to be patriotic and ensure that companies that employ a huge [number] of South Africans be allowed to work. It is a big shame for the government to allow South African citizens to be excluded economically before, during and after the lockdown; this is the time for government to put South Africa first.*' (African Transformation Movement (ATM) President Vuyolwethu Zungula, 19 June 2020)

Introduction

On 5 March 2020, South Africa's National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) confirmed its first case of Covid-19. The patient who tested positive for the virus was a white male who had just travelled from Italy. Through contact tracing and as more people tested positive, a narrative of Covid-19 as a rich man's and white people's disease started going round on social media. After all, the disease had reached the South African shores via 'air' (airplane), a mode of transport that is out of reach for the majority of South Africans. The association of the virus with migration, race and class was clear from the start. Just as HIV has long been framed as a poor man's disease spread by poor mostly male migrants, Covid-19 was being perceived as the rich migrant's disease. With the continued rise in positive cases in a racially skewed form, social media (mostly WhatsApp) were flooded with jokes, statements and short videos implying that poor black people were immune to the disease. However, as Covid-19 cases increasingly affected people across the board, it became clear that coronavirus was non-selective regarding race, class, or nationality. The discourse shifted from being racial to national in the form of xenophobia, as specific nationalities were singled out by anti-immigrant protestors as scapegoats and economic parasites warranting discrimination.

As highlighted in the opening statement, for the proponents of the 'Put South Africa First'[1] campaign, the pandemic apparently presented an opportunity for the South African government to put South Africans first. This followed and was followed by a series of online and street protests by mostly black South Africans calling for migrants and more specifically 'foreigners' to go back to their homes. According to the International Organization for Migration, a migrant is 'a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons (IOM n.d.). Based on this definition, however, it was evident that not all migrants were framed as foreigners and that the anti-immigrant protestors were not opposed to all foreigners in South Africa. Who, then, was considered a foreigner in South Africa during the pandemic? And what processes led to this categorization of some migrants as foreigners, for example, black Africans and others such as white Europeans as not foreigners? If Covid-19 was first thought of as a white disease, why did the subsequent xenophobic discourse and protests not include the whites as targets or foreigners? Like others in this Special Issue, I argue that, given the historical and current status quo undergirded by white supremacy, even though some South Africans still view whites and rich migrants as 'foreigners', they still feel powerless to target such categories of foreigners. This leaves poor black migrants as the only people to represent anything that is foreign. This observation is no doubt rooted in the global racial ideology (Iwata and Nomoto 2017), in which whiteness still retains symbolic capital despite the ending of apartheid.

The over-representation of black African migrants as targets of xenophobia in South Africa has resulted in some calling it Afrophobia (Matsinhe 2011). However, Afrophobia on its own cannot account for the violence against Asian migrants or explain why citizens from other African countries are not targeted (Landau 2011). Similarly, nationalism on its own cannot explain why white non-nationals are hardly ever targeted or why certain South African ethnic communities, such as the Venda and Tsonga, are also discriminated against (Neocosmos 2010). This calls for a nuanced understanding of the notions of difference and particularly the idea of the 'foreigner' within the complex historical and contemporary socio-economic and political fabric of South Africa. Based on the stories circulating in the media during the pandemic and the experiences of my migrant interlocutors before it broke out, I use two case studies to explore the idea of the 'foreigner' as a racialized term applied to black migrants from specific African countries. I also argue that the Covid-19 pandemic provided a conducive xenophobic climate characterized by uncertainty and fear and fuelled by long-standing exclusionary anti-immigrant discourses (Misago 2011, Zanker and Moyo 2021).

I situate my argument within the unique history of South Africa, focusing specifically on the Othering regime during apartheid and on post-apartheid nationalism in which racism played and still plays a critical role in the hierarchization of different people along racial and ethnic lines (Landau 2011). The current identification of certain groups of people as non-citizens, as implied in the opening quotation, and as less than human cannot be divorced from western racial ideology, which is premised on white supremacy (Mignolo 2011; Bonilla-Silva 2015; Lan 2019). This is noticeable in the term 'foreigner' as it is applied in the South African context and several other contexts within Africa, where white migrants are hardly seen as foreigners but rather as tourists, expats or just as investors coming to add value (Kunz 2020). On the other hand, black migrants are not only deemed foreign but are viewed as parasites and called derogatory names. This article proposes an understanding of xenophobia against other African nationals by South Africans as a form of racialization based not on phenotypical differences, but on the intersections of class, nationality, immigration status and related ideas of foreignness.

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[1] Founded by Mario Khumalo, a critic of the ANC (the South African ruling party).

In South Africa, xenophobia has been examined through the lenses of nationalism and globalization (Hickel 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009), with a few authors making associations with racism (Landau 2011). Racism has been largely framed by being premised on the black/white dichotomy or global south/north relations (Iwata and Nemoto 2018), shrouding seemingly non-racial practices and experiences that perpetuate racial inequalities of power (Bonilla-Silva 2015: 1369). In recent years, a significant number of studies have focused on the notions of race and racism outside the western hemisphere (Iwata and Nemoto 2018) and more specifically on south-to-south racial dynamics (Sautman and Yan 2016; Lan 2019) as mediated by both historical and contemporary political, social and economic contexts. Drawing on such studies, I examine how the current post-apartheid dilemmas around nativism, nationalism and related xenophobic sentiments and acts – more specifically Covid-19 induced – have roots in the binaries of settler (citizen) and native (foreigner) which were created during apartheid as a vehicle of racism. This is particularly important in South Africa, where the discourse on xenophobia has been side lined and silenced in scholarly, popular and political discourse, being overshadowed by more racial forms of discrimination and victimization such as those related to apartheid (Landau 2011).

Using the Covid-19 pandemic as a case study, I show how the victimization of black South Africans in apartheid South Africa is being replaced by the victimization of African foreigners in post-apartheid South Africa (Matsinhe 2011: 296). The pandemic is a relevant case study allowing us to understand xenophobia for a couple of reasons, one being the virus proving that 'we all are living beings with more or less the same biological needs' (Lorenzini 2020: s43), despite the inhumane treatment meted out to those who are identified as 'others'. It amplified the hierarchies between different human populations and provided a justification for the South African state to implement and reinforce restrictive measures on the mobility of migrants under the guise of a public health response (Vearey et al. 2021, Zanker and Moyo 2021). The disruptions that were brought about by the nationwide lockdown had economic repercussions on the already ailing economy and exacerbated the inequalities, thereby refuelling resentment towards migrants who were deemed undeserving of the cash-based relief assistance offered by the government. Furthermore, previous studies have established that contexts of social, economic and political uncertainty such as those triggered by the pandemic breed collective violence (Misago 2011). In what follows, I present my methodology, followed by my conceptual framework and two case studies. After presenting my findings, I will analyse the case studies, situating them within the historical colonial logic of racial differentiation by drawing parallels with the xenophobic sentiments expressed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Methodology

This paper draws on a few specific social media posts on the WhatsApp group 'We are One' (a pseudonym), which was formed during the extended lockdown by South Africans and migrant activists against xenophobia. I joined this group on 21 June 2020 as a migration scholar and researcher after obtaining consent from the group administrator, who was the only one posting in the group. The group was formed as a communication channel to facilitate migrants' access to health facilities and information during the lockdown. With only twenty participants identified as the leaders of various migrant communities and organizations, the group's administrator took up the role of updating group members about the different measures introduced by the government and highlighting how such measures affected migrants. Apart from updates around Covid-19, other updates included warnings about planned protests against migrants, as well as news of migrant experiences at South Africa's borders and in other parts of Africa. I also draw on ethnographic material gathered from June 2017 to February 2018 as part of an ongoing anthropological study on migration, masculinities and violence in Johannesburg inner city, which received ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Witwatersrand. During this study I spent a significant amount of time hanging out on street corners mostly with migrant men and a few women and children. I also followed the work of a few NGOs working in the area of gender equality, human rights and violence. I attended events such as workshops like the one I share in this paper. As a Zimbabwean woman myself the majority of my participants were from Zimbabwe, but others came from South Africa, Ghana, Malawi and Mozambique. Most of the workshop participants were unemployed or marginally employed migrants and South Africans. In the findings section I share an ethnographic vignette of a workshop on xenophobia revealing the racialization of some black African migrants before the pandemic. In the second case study, I explore the nationalist activists behind the social media campaign #PutSouthAfricaFirst. While these two case studies reflect a continuity in anti-migrant sentiment in South Africa, they also show the intensification and expansion of the racialization and social stigmatization of black migrants after the outbreak of Covid-19. Discourse analysis was conducted paying particular attention to the language and terms used in different contexts to refer to migrants. In what follows, I draw on the notions of nationalism and racism to situate the xenophobia rhetoric within the racialization discourse.

Xenophobia, Nationalism and the Racialization of Migrants

A significant body of scholarly literature has emerged exploring the many causes of xenophobia in South Africa, most of which pertain to political and economic factors born of globalization (Misago 2016; Hickel 2014). Several studies from the sociological and political science disciplines trace these xenophobic attacks back to the neoliberal polices and structural adjustments that have undermined livelihoods by spurring competition over limited resources such as jobs and housing (Hickel 2014). The effects of such a scenario are well documented, with several scholars agreeing – though not without opposition – that, in the face of diminishing resources, people use whatever social distinctions they may perceive they have to make claims on resources (Neocosmos 2008; Hickel 2014). The distinctions between foreigner and local are emphasized to justify entitlement to the limited resources through a process of racialization. Racialization has been defined as a socially constructed hierarchical categorization of people based on physical and cultural characteristics for the purposes of domination over them (Sautman and Yan 2016).

The racialization of migrants is embedded in their being conceived as a racial problem that needs to be addressed. Silverstein (2005) explores the genealogy of the various forms of racialization that migrants are subjected to across space and time, such as 'nomad, labourer, uprooted victim, hybrid and transmigrant' (376). Cross-cutting all these terms are the supposedly inherent problems associated with migrants, such as their being culturally different, immoral, primitive and disorderly, which would no doubt disrupt their presumably stable, orderly destinations (Vigneswaran 2013). The inherent characteristic of migrants traversing territorial and at times cultural boundaries has also been viewed as a threat to nation states, particularly in relation to human security (Iwata and Nemoto 2017; Nyamnjoh 2015), calling as a result, for the control, regulation and even elimination of specific migrants. This profiling of migrants, particularly in Africa, is rooted in the two processes of colonial racism and post-colonial nationalism.

Although, nationalism and racism are distinct notions, in postcolonial societies the two have shaped each other. While nationalism has had other symbols such as the national anthem and national flag, racism's symbol was the body itself (Mosse 1995). Nationalism as a racial project draws on indigenous discourses of difference that distinguish between nationals and non-nationals. Mignolo (2017) argues that 'the nation-state cares (in practice but not in theory) for nationals and not for human beings. Non-nationals are lesser human beings; they are foreigners, immigrants, refugees, and for colonial settlers, indigenous from the land they settled in are second class nationals' (ibid.: 40). In South Africa, the trope of citizenship is used on specific African nationalities and ethnicities identified as foreigners. Because they are perceived to be lesser human beings, black foreigners become the targets of xenophobic attacks.

The racial profiling of black migrants from Africa is based on the unstated assumption of a linear model of modernity in which migrants are presumed to move from a less to a more developed territory (Iwata and Nemoto 2017; Silverstein 2005). Neocosmos (2008) makes a similar argument by situating racial dynamics within apartheid's anti-rural, pro-urban rhetoric, in which black people were ruralized and devalued, while white people were urbanized and valued. The movement of the so-called ruralized black (South) Africans into urban areas was thus regulated and constrained by the pass laws. Neocosmos further argues that 'the post-apartheid state simply shifted this rural/urban binary opposition to Africa/South Africa, such that Africa is perceived as rural and backward and South Africa as urban and modern' (quoted by Matsinhe 2011: 298). This is a common observation among the colonized, as Fanon noted among the Antilleans, who considered themselves to be white and thus different from the Negro, who is said to live in Africa. South Africans, both white and black, do not view or rather want to be viewed as belonging to that part of Africa that has been ruralized and devalued (Matsinhe 2011). For whites, this consciousness has lasted from the peak of gold-mining, where South Africa was the headquarters of European migrants who tried to make the country as European as possible. For the black South Africans this discourse of exceptionalism is powered by their desire to distance themselves from their fellow Africans or their so-called 'poorer relatives' (Neocosmos 2008, 591) from rural Africa, who come with their dirt and outdated religious and cultural baggage, different from their own.

In the western world, the visible and often perceived differences in phenotypes have been a major source of racialization, as evidenced by the stereotyping of bodies that are not white and from non-western countries as culturally inferior, foreign, dangerous and therefore unwanted (Iwata and Nemoto 2017). Lan (2019), in her study of African migrants in China, explores the idea of blackness and foreignness and postulates that 'African migrants' black skin colour, coupled with the language barrier and cultural misunderstandings in daily interactions, often serve to reinforce their 'foreigner' status (ibid.: 15). While this may be understandable in the context of China, South Africa presents a different case, as there is no physical distinction between the African migrants and locals: if anything, they share the same ancestral and linguistical roots, in addition to a common colonial history. However, African migrants are still racialized as 'foreigners' in South Africa based on their nationality, class and immigration status. A similar observation is recorded by Iwata and Nemoto (2017), who find that the racialization of Japanese Brazilians in Japan is not based on phenotype, but on nationality, class, language and cultural differences. Another observation was made among the Victorian Irish, who were racialized by the British using the derogatory term 'white chimpanzees' to label them (Martin 2014: 52).

This paper contributes to existing literature on South-South racialization by examining how the outbreak of Covid-19 provides a historical conjuncture that brings together multiple forms of racialization (e.g. colonial racism, post-apartheid nationalism, xenophobia), which involves multiple institutional and individual actors (the state, anti-racist activists, NGO workers, individual South African citizens) as depicted in the case studies that follow.

While all black Africans were framed as native foreigners by the apartheid government, racial profiling in post-apartheid South Africa happens at multiple levels (Mullings 2005). First are the majority black South Africans, or rather the dominant ethnic groups who having been alienated by the white supremacist society, and who distinguish the nativity and citizenship of their fellow black South Africans from ethnic minorities, possibly as efforts to qualify themselves as non-foreigners. On another level are the marginalized black South Africans, who reproduce the white discourse of racialization by targeting their hatred and xenophobia against the black African migrants and racializing them as 'foreigners.' This was pronounced during the pandemic and was captured by the Put South Africa First campaign, which called for distinction along national lines. In all these processes, the white South Africans and white migrants have remained unscathed and their foreignness went unquestioned, making it a battle between two black minorities, one native, the other consisting of migrants, as illustrated in the case studies that follow.

Zimbabweans are not Refugees: Nationalism before Covid-19 [2]

In November 2017, I attended a workshop organized by Men and Boys in collaboration with several other NGOs and government departments that was aimed at bringing South Africans and African migrants together. It came after the xenophobic attacks that had been reported close to Johannesburg inner city in February 2017, a few months prior to the workshop. During the attacks, shops were looted, and supposed foreigners were attacked by South Africans. The aggression and violence against African immigrants were widely covered in the newspapers, on national television and on social media. Some politicians, including the former Gauteng Community Safety MEC, spoke out, condemning the atrocious acts meted out on fellow Africans and calling for peace. Men and Boys and its partners came up with an intervention plan. This workshop was one of the proposed interventions. Moris, a migrant from Rwanda, was the facilitator of the workshop, working for Men and Boys. During the workshop Moris revived an argument that had begun the previous day and could not be resolved. The argument arose after one South African woman had expressed her disdain of supposed foreigners, here referring to Zimbabweans. After a moment of silence, she spoke out.

> I lost my job at SABC (South African Broadcasting Cooperation) because of some Zimbabwean. They take our jobs, these people, even our *spaza* (convenience) shops. The Somalis are selling the same commodities at a cheaper price, and they do not tell us where they get their stock. In the end, all our customers go to their shops. What happens to us? Another thing [is,] they (Zimbabweans) are starting their funny '*mapostori* churches' in our parks. Here you find one church in a few meters another group of people, they are *messing up* our beautiful parks. Then there are these Nigerians who are selling drugs to our kids bringing in corruption.

This was MaZodwa, a South African woman in her late fifties. She was unemployed and spent her time attending community programs offered by the government or NGOs. According to Moris, MaZodwa was one of the self-appointed community leaders who were mobilizing community members against foreign nationals. MaZodwa made it clear that she was firm in her opinion that foreigners should go back to their own countries.

Although MaZodwa's passion-filled outburst left many people uncomfortable, in a way it summarized the whole discussion surrounding the xenophobic narrative in South Africa. Moris responded to MaZodwa by reading out the UNHCR definition of a refugee as stipulated in human rights code. Intending to draw empathy, he explained how so many migrants and refugees are forced to be in South Africa due to war in their own countries, for example. The woman interrupted, pointing out that Zimbabweans were not refugees. 'They are just *parasites* who cannot fix their own country but come to take over from our [South African] inheritance', she added. In this statement she uses various terms to distinguish herself from the migrants she was describing. She identifies herself as representing South Africans, who in her opinion are the victims of others who have come to take away their inheritance, which they supposedly acquired through the liberation struggles that ousted the apartheid regime.[3] She also presents South Africa as an orderly and clean country, with beautiful parks, that is under attack from filthy migrants. During the colonial and apartheid periods the racial segregation in many parts of Africa was premised on the reasoning that the blacks would bring disorder and dirt to those places (mainly cities) that had been designated for white people. To a certain extent, this reproduces the colonial discourse of racializing black South Africans as 'foreigners'.

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[2] Case study extracted from PhD thesis by author (2021)

Left speechless and seeing that no amount of persuasion or talk of morality could convince MaZodwa, Moris resorted to the constitution and reminded MaZodwa that violence was a criminal offence. 'The constitution postulates that everybody should receive equal treatment irrespective of their race, gender and nationality', he said as he handed out a small book entitled '*The Constitution of South Africa'* to the participants. South Africa has been commended for having a progressive constitution based on the tenets of equality. Famously known as the Equality Clause, the constitution stipulates that 'Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law'. However, based on the arguments made by anti-immigrant protestors, it is apparent that not everyone is equal and not everyone deserves protection, and that not everyone deserves relief during the pandemic. It is evident in MaZodwa's remark that while some migrants such as refugees may indeed deserve sympathy, some do not deserve to benefit from the South African government. Although MaZodwa's reaction may have been influenced by state and/or NGO discourses, her refusal to accept the categorization of Zimbabweans as deserving refutes the longstanding argument of xenophobic violence arising as a result of evil politicians and innocent masses (Misago 2011). MaZodwa voluntarily subscribed to the anti-immigrant discourses based on her personal experiences, which fed into her broader claim of 'migrants taking our jobs'. The same claim was made by the Put South Africa First protestors explored below. While the South African Frist movement has been long brewing in the country, during the pandemic the movement found a platform to express their dissatisfaction with the government. There was an outbreak of protests not only Twitter 'streets' but also in the physical streets, as well as on different social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Below I describe the campaign.

Put South Africa First: Nationalism during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The hashtag movement originated with the South African First political party, whose president, Mario Khumalo, had always criticised the ruling ANC government for failing to control immigration flows or provide economic opportunities for South African citizens. He accused the state of 'rewarding illegal immigrants with jobs and business rather than deporting them' (Rampedi 2020), a sentiment that was also brought up during the 2008 xenophobic attacks (Misago 2011). He further argued that xenophobia was a label being used by his critics to silence him and his supporters. On Twitter this campaign has been popularized with multiple vocal voices, with the prominent one being @uLerato Pillay, considered a fictional character by the Daily Maverick (2020), who joined Twitter in November 2019 and had almost sixty thousand followers by August 2020. Curious about who this supposedly fictional character was, the Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change (CABC) conducted an investigation and established that this account was at the centre of a 'well-oiled propaganda machine with a web of 80 interconnected Twitter accounts that interact with each other, recycle one another's tweets' (Bezuidenhout 2020 n.p). Another famous figure supporting the Put South Africa First Movement is Gayton McKenzie, the president of the Patriotic Alliance political party of South Africa, who since 2013 has been lobbying the government to prioritize poor South Africans in handing out economic opportunities, 'whether Black, White, Coloured or Indian'. His approach emphasizes class and nationality or citizenship over race. Below I share one of the flyers that was circulating around various social media platforms in August 2020.

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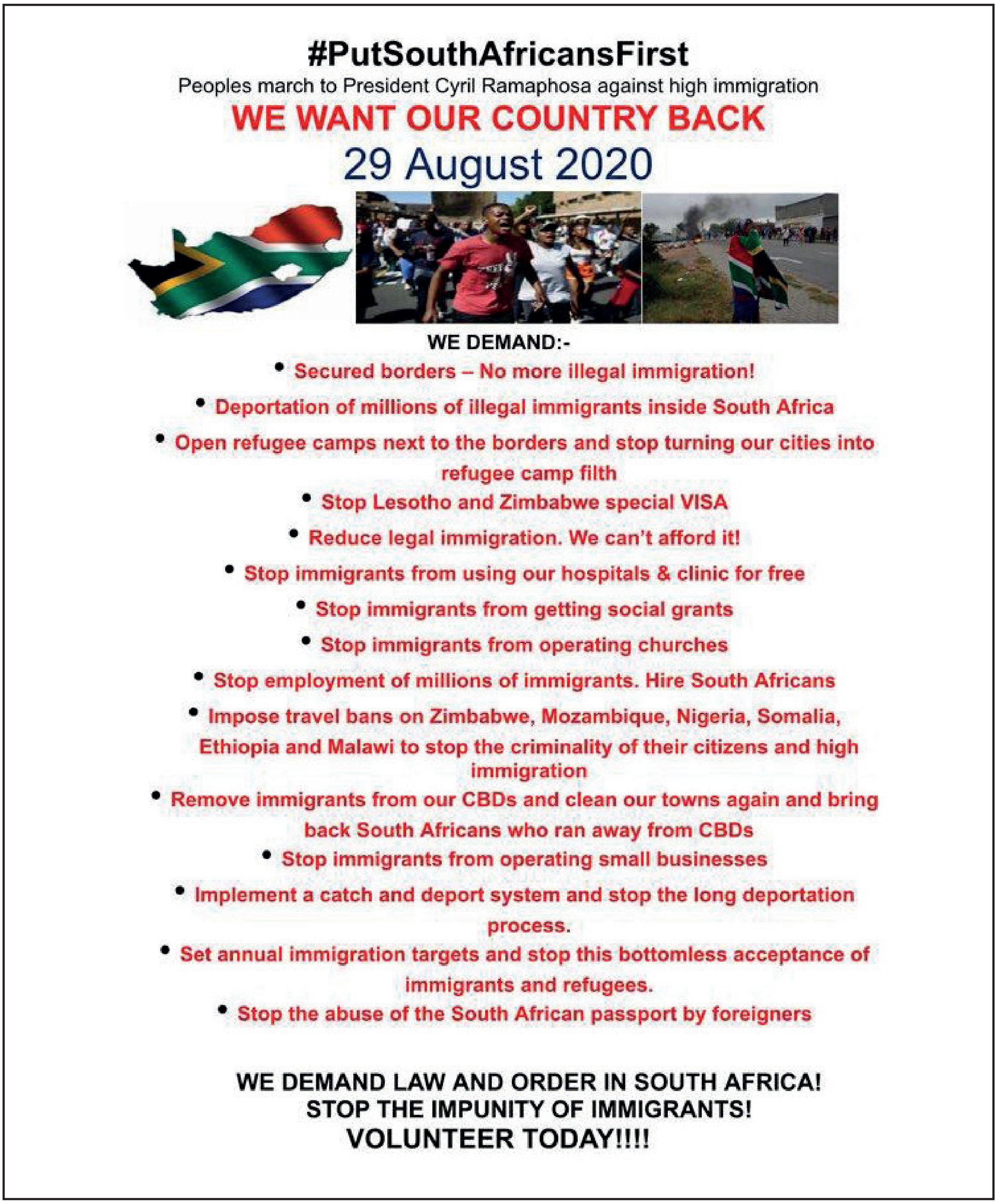
[3] Interestingly some African migrants use the same trope to claim a share of the South African economy, stating that they helped South Africa during the liberation struggle.



#PutSouthAfricansFirst

Peoples march to President Cyril Ramaphosa against high immigration

WE WANT OUR COUNTRY BACK

29 August 2020

WE DEMAND:-

- Secured borders – No more illegal immigration!
- Deportation of millions of illegal immigrants inside South Africa
- Open refugee camps next to the borders and stop turning our cities into refugee camp filth
- Stop Lesotho and Zimbabwe special VISA
- Reduce legal immigration. We can't afford it!
- Stop immigrants from using our hospitals & clinic for free
- Stop immigrants from getting social grants
- Stop immigrants from operating churches
- Stop employment of millions of immigrants. Hire South Africans
- Impose travel bans on Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia and Malawi to stop the criminality of their citizens and high immigration
- Remove immigrants from our CBDs and clean our towns again and bring back South Africans who ran away from CBDs
- Stop immigrants from operating small businesses
- Implement a catch and deport system and stop the long deportation process.
- Set annual immigration targets and stop this bottomless acceptance of immigrants and refugees.
- Stop the abuse of the South African passport by foreigners

WE DEMAND LAW AND ORDER IN SOUTH AFRICA!
STOP THE IMPUNITY OF IMMIGRANTS!
VOLUNTEER TODAY!!!!

The demands made in this flyer confirm the argument raised in the first case study. It refers to the so-called parasitic behaviour of some migrants who have come to South Africa. The demand to 'Stop immigrants from using our hospitals and clinics for free' could have been informed by rumours circulating on social media (including the We Are One WhatsApp group) of hospital beds filling up quickly due to the rapidly spreading disease. The flier also demanded that nationalities should be denied special visas, such as citizens of Lesotho and Zimbabwe. The special permits given to these nationalities were meant to ease pressure on the asylum system, for example, the Documentation of Zimbabweans Project (2010). However, this was read by some South Africans as showing special favours to foreigners at the expense of the citizens. The online protesters also called for the imposition of travel bans on Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Somalia, countries generally viewed as a threat based on identified cultural differences. In mainstream media Nigerians have been framed as drug-dealers, Mozambicans and Zimbabweans as illegals and Somalis as hungry parasites (Neocosmos 2008; Musariri 2021).

In addition to banning illegal migrants, the protestors also requested reducing the numbers of legal migrants, claiming that the country could not afford to take them. Migrants were associated with filth, echoing the sentiments made by MaZodwa in the first case study that foreigners were making South Africa's 'beautiful parks dirty'. The protestors make an explicit call to clean up the city accompanied by a Twitter campaign: 'Operation clean-up South Africa'. In this campaign, the protestors called upon fellow South Africans to join them in 'cleaning up the city', removing its filth and criminality. The campaign had several hashtags that went viral, including #23SeptemberCleanSA & #PutSouthAfricansFirst march with us for a safer South Africa free of immigrant criminals! #zimbabwemustgo #NigeriansMustGo #VoetsekNigerians.[4]

Following the various noises made on social media, which were accompanied by street protests, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the nation, stating that the government was reviewing the hiring of foreign nationals in South Africa. During his address, the President clarified that, while he was against populist sentiments blaming the foreigners for the unemployment in South Africa, he did agree that there was a need to review the country's foreign labour policies. To this end, he had established an interministerial committee to look into the issues raised.[5] He issued a statement that, 'By the same measure, we need to understand that we must respond to the frustration of our own people at the violation of immigration laws and other regulations by those companies that employ foreign nationals illegally.' Both before and after this statement, five photos of Zimbabwean passports were posted in the We Are On WhatsApp group with a 'double stamp' symbolizing deportation and being banned from entering South Africa for five years. The reason was that the holders of these passports had overstayed their permitted time in South Africa during the lockdown. This shows how the regulation of migrants' mobility was more than just rhetoric. In the following sections, I situate the two case studies within the broader, contemporary and historical political landscape of South Africa.

Contextualizing the Case Studies

The two case studies described above make it evident that the supposed problem of foreigners in South Africa does not apply to everyone who has the status of migrant. The notions of belonging, citizenship and associated deservingness before and during the pandemic were shaped by various factors, including race, class, immigration status and distinct notions of foreignness. Commenting on the South African response to refugee protection during the pandemic, Moyo et al. (2021: 2) have already argued that the response was led by the 'desire to gain legitimacy from a frustrated public', a finding established by Landau (2011) more than a decade ago during his inquiry into the xenophobic protests of 2008. I concur with these assertions and argue that the South African state and some subpopulations took advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic to express and manifest the already existing sentiments and policies against black African immigrants. I further argue that the selection process regarding which migrants to exclude and/or include can be understood as a form of racialization of black African migrants based on intersecting factors that go beyond nationality, immigration status, class and race. I draw on the peculiar history of South Africa, where the colonial logic of racial differentiation had a bearing on the governance of movements of people, both within South Africa and beyond.

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[4] https://twitter.com/better_SA_fan/status/1305235602594500608?s=20

[5] https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/429332/government-to-review-rules-around-hiring-foreign-workers-in-south-africa/

South African history is marred by violent racial and ethnic segregation, marginalization and discrimination, institutionalized under the apartheid regime, whose legacy and social effects have survived to this day, despite its official abolition in the early1990s. Instituted in 1948, apartheid was characterized by a political culture of white supremacy that stratified people according to their alleged phenotypes (Neocosmos 2008). According to Mullings (2005), white ethnic groups in South Africa (the British and the Boers) were formerly at war but decided to join forces and use the apartheid regime to unify whites by excluding blacks, Indians and Coloureds (mixed race), thus justifying white supremacy anchored in biological determinism. Neocosmos (2010) suggests that, as the whites came to identify themselves as South Africans, they identified the black South Africans as 'foreign natives' and 'non-national'. The idea of a black man being foreign to the African soil was ingrained in the minds of the black majority by the white supremacists.

Black South Africans were therefore racialized as foreign natives and governed by laws such as the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970, which restricted their mobility socially, economically, politically and geographically. People were assigned places of residence based on their ethnic and racial categorizations. Movement between residentially segregated urban spaces and places was regulated by the Group Areas Act of 1950. People who took up residence in other areas were considered illegal residents warranting arrest or detention. Rural areas, also known as 'reserves' or Bantustans, were designated for black South Africans, while urban areas were reserved for whites. Black men and women were allowed in the city to work as wage labourers, but had to leave their families behind in the rural areas.

In 1994 the apartheid system was abolished, resulting in the repeal of the repressive laws that had been used to discriminate systematically against the black population. During the same period, several African countries were going through political, social and economic challenges, such as those induced by structural adjustment programmes (Musariri 2021). The relatively lax migration laws of the post-apartheid period, coupled with rapid globalization, also saw South Africa opening its doors to other African countries. The newly legalized freedom of the post-apartheid period did not facilitate international mobility alone, it also resulted in the mass migration of black people into South Africa. Inner-city Johannesburg, formerly inhabited by a largely white population of European descent, slowly became a haven for black African immigrants who occupied areas such as Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville. The wealthier whites moved out of the inner city to the spacious outskirts of Johannesburg, making room for economically marginalized black South Africans (Musariri 2021). The latter made their way into the inner city, making the inner city a convergence and concentration zone for both internal and international migrants (Vearey et al. 2017). As inner-city residence, they are on the margins of the economy, being plagued with chronic unemployment and poverty. In such contexts of multiple inequalities, competition over resources steepens and economic deprivation intensifies, as do margins of distinction, to the point that all those who are not South Africans become the 'others' who are supposedly out to get jobs, houses and women 'belonging' to locals (Landau, 2011). The distinctions between who is West African, East African or a Southerner are amplified, classist codes of nationalism are called into the picture, tribal margins are drawn, and violence becomes a useful tool with which to reorder categories and bring back social boundaries (Hickel 2014).

Xenophobia in Post-apartheid South Africa

For a few decades, several South African anti-immigrant protesters have raised the alarm around the issue of porous borders and undocumented immigrants. As a result, nationals from other African countries foreigners are called derogatory names such as *kwerekwere*, criminals and parasites, labels which are hardly applied to non-African migrants. The Community Health Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2016 confirms that there is an 'uncontrolled influx (of migrants which) comes at a high cost for the poor masses expecting improved standards of living from the present government' (2016: 2). The same survey estimated that there were 1.5 million migrants living in South Africa. According to the report, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi and Britain continue to be the top five sending countries, with Zimbabwe recording over a third of the migrants (Statistics South Africa 2016). Previously Zimbabweans in South Africa had been labelled a 'human tsunami' (Misago 2011: 91). Due to this high proportion of migrants, Zimbabweans and Basotho in South Africa have been a target of xenophobic attacks, among other nationalities such as Nigerians and Somalis who are identified as illegal criminals and economic parasites, but hardly anything of this affects migrants from Britain.

Anti-immigrant South Africans have condemned the government, claiming that it could do more to control the immigration flows and protect the economic and social interests of its citizens (Misago 2011). Recent years have seen a notable increase in the intolerance of foreigners since the 1994-95 Operation Buyelekhaya ('Go Back Home') to the most recent Operation Dudula of 2022.[6] Cross-cutting the protesters' sentiments and re-emerging following Covid-19 are claims of failure by the South Africa government to curb undocumented migration – mostly of black Africans – and provide economic opportunities for South Africans, especially the low-skilled black population. This line of thought has been refuted by various scholars, who have attributed xenophobic violence to the long-standing fear of and animosity towards foreigners and to state discourses blaming foreigners for the country's social and economic decline, which helps create the xenophobic climate (Zanker and Moyo 2021; Landau 2011; Misago 2011). Misago (2011) specifically foregrounds the important role of local politics and leadership, the lack of conflict resolution mechanisms and the culture of impunity as pivotal to the emergence of xenophobic violence in South Africa.

Migration in post-apartheid South Africa has been governed by, first, the Aliens Control Act of 1991, which was responsible for thousands of deportations of African migrants when the international borders opened after apartheid (Monson and Arian 2011). After this came the current Immigration Act of 2002 and the Refugees Act of 1998, which regulate international migration and refugee asylum-seeking respectively. Despite the claims regarding the lax immigration laws, South Africa's approach to the governance of migration had always emphasized securitization undergirded by racist and xenophobic tendencies (Vearey et al. 2021; Moyo et al. 2021) while encouraging the immigration of highly skilled labour and excluding low-skilled migrants. The underlying assumptions informing migration legislation and policies is that, if not controlled, an influx of 'useless' migrants will come into the country and destabilize its economic and social fabric (Neocosmos 2008). Since the March

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[6] **https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/4/8/what-is-operation-dudula-s-africas-anti-immigration-vigilante**

2020 lockdown the securitization of migration has increased, as evidenced by the deployment of the South African National Defence Forces (SANDF) and South African Police Services (SAPS) at specific South African borders and strategic places throughout the country to maintain order (Zanker and Moyo 2021). As shown in the second case study, there has also been a notable resurgence of populist ideologies of nationalism in the form of online movements consisting of South Africans protesting against 'foreigners'. The Put South Africa First' social media campaign garnered support from across the spectrum, with political and elite backing. Once again migrants from specific African countries were used as the scapegoats for the ongoing social and economic challenges facing many South Africans, aggravated further as result of Covid-19.

Xenophobia and Covid-19

According to South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey, the official unemployment rate was at 30% as of the first quarter of the year 2020 and 35.3% at the end of 2021 (Statistics South Africa 2022). Another report of August 2020 states that an estimated 1.5 million people lost their jobs due to the lockdown (Statistics South Africa 2020). The Covid-19 crisis has led to a fall in formal employment, and nine out of ten South African businesses have reported reductions in turnover (ILO 2020). The fifty-four percent of households in South Africa that have been pushed out of permanent jobs to informal or temporary contracts as a coping mechanism for businesses affected by Covid-19 were likely to fall into poverty after the six-month stimulus package ended (UNDP South Africa 2020). In contexts of existing inequalities, crises in whatever form tend to have similar unequal effects. Unemployment and poverty are both amplified in migrant populations, increasing their precarity (ILO 2020, Landau 2011). Migrant populations, particularly the undocumented, survive in the informal labour market, which was hit hard by Covid-19. This was exacerbated by the government, which adopted an 'us' (citizens) and 'them' (non-citizens) dichotomy in their administration of the relief projects, which were only made available to South African citizens and specific type of migrants, such as those with the status of permanent residence. Several migrants found themselves excluded from these relief projects. Foreign-owned businesses were not allowed to operate during the lockdown (Zanker and Moyo 2021). Even after the lockdown, jobs that were occupied by migrants (mostly black), such as waiting at tables and cleaning, were now reserved to South African citizens only. A South African national identity document (ID) was now a requirement to get not only jobs but cash-based relief.

To fill the gap made by the South African government, international humanitarian NGOs offered relief packages to non-South Africans, albeit from specific countries, leaving out those who did not meet their criteria in a way that constituted a hierarchization of migrants. Although it would go beyond the scope of this paper, I propose looking at the role of development actors such as international NGOs in contributing to the process of othering by placing people in hierarchical categories such as refugee, migrant or asylum-seeker (Vanyoro et al 2019). This selective exclusion of certain categories of migrants cannot be divorced from the official categories established by development actors such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). In its 1951 Refugee Convention, the UNHCR identified a refugee as one who flees their country for fear of being persecuted (UNHCR 2010), a definition that excludes many migrants from African countries, who flee their countries for economic reasons. For example, according to the census Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Lesotho make up the top three migrant-sending countries. Because such migrants move to South Africa for economic reasons, they become 'effectively naturalized and gendered as the *homo economics'* (Silverstein 2005: 372), and their economic efforts to survive are 'criminalized' (Neocosmos 2010). Without the protection of the human rights 'law', such foreigners are exposed and become more vulnerable. Again, not having refugee status excludes them from the mainstream economy and other facets of life, as expressed in MaZodwa's comment that 'Zimbabweans were not refugees'. From these case studies, it is evident that not every migrant is a foreigner and not all foreigners are problematic. The tweet shared above show that the protesters do not have a problem with all foreigners, thus refuting the definition of xenophobia as a fear of foreign nationals. As in the case of racial projects where access to whiteness was regulated by class (Mullings 2005), here degrees of foreignness among migrants are shaped by hegemonic ideologies of foreignness that go beyond legal discourses to include not only non-nationals but also South Africans from less dominant ethnic groups (Neocosmos 2010).

It is apparent that, while the socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 were felt by everyone across the spectrum, response mechanisms, such as the relief packages, were distributed according to categories of 'citizens' and 'non-citizens', or rather 'non-humans', to quote Mignolo (2017: 40), thus leaving out many migrants who were already wallowing in poverty and hunger. The language of migrants as 'non-human' in this case suffices, as the exclusion of migrants from receiving food packages implies that they are deemed non-humans who do not feel any hunger. This can also be deduced in the language used by the Put South Africa First protestors. An example is a Twitter post calling upon South African citizens to join them in 'cleaning up the city' by getting rid of the 'immigrant criminals' and their 'dirt'. In the same tweet, the protestors used hashtags targeting specific countries, as noted above. This profiling of migrants was associated with the statuses given to the respective countries, based on perceived cultural ideologies, as well as socio-economic conditions, such as Nigeria's association with drug-dealing (Neocosmos 2010) and Zimbabwe's with political and economic failure. Beyond this, such framing of difference can be paralleled to the colonial logic of racial differentiation.

Conclusion

Covid-19 is said to have exacerbated already existing inequalities and forms of violence. One such pre-existing form of inequality was xenophobia. Scholars across disciplines have come up with various reasons to explain the occurrence of xenophobia in South Africa, including globalization and chauvinistic nationalism as hangovers of the colonial and apartheid regimes. Central to all these arguments is the notion that xenophobia is fuelled by systems and practices that order human beings into categories that emphasize alterity and difference, such as the examples cited above. Indeed, while globalization and associated economic deprivation as a contributor to xenophobic violence maybe applicable to a certain extent to the South African context (Misago 2011), this line of thought still does not explain the hierarchization of migrants, as in the tweet cited above, which specifically targets Nigerians and Zimbabweans. This argument could only account for the frustration and desperation of the perpetrators, and it fails to explain why certain nationalities were targeted (Neocosmos 2008). Not all migrants are foreigners, and not all foreigners are considered dangerous to society.

While the response of the government during the pandemic was nationalistic in that it divided the population into citizens and non-citizens (migrants), according to some South Africans, represented by MaZodwa and the Put South Africa First protestors, not all migrants were foreigners and not all foreigners were undeserving. I have argued that it is the racial profiling of specific migrants based on the intersecting factors of nationality, immigration status, class and race, and drawing on the codes of foreignness, that determined who was excluded or included. I have further argued that this racialization has its roots in colonial racism and post-apartheid nationalism and found a channel of expression during the Covid-19 pandemic, where the government had to respond to the crisis in a way that appeased already frustrated and marginalized black South Africans. Although all these issues preceded Covid-19, the pandemic indeed provided an avenue for both individuals and collectives to express their long brewing anti-immigrant sentiments and direct them against black African migrants.

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Note on the Author

LINDA MUSARIRI is a post-doctoral fellow at the African Centre for Migration and Society at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa researching migration, identity, inclusive development and knowledge making. She is also a junior fellow at the Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development, focusing on climate change, plastic recycling and health in southern Africa. **linda.musariri@gmail.com**

Pandemics Politics: Class, Gender and Stigmatized Labor in Bangladesh's Garment Industry

by Dina M. Siddiqi (New York University) and
Hasan Ashraf (Jahangirnagar University)

Abstract

The effects of Covid-19 dramatized yet again the fragilities and asymmetries built into global supply chains and the marginal structural location of Bangladesh – the world's second largest clothing manufacturer – within the apparel supply chain. It was a reminder that the distribution of risk is highly asymmetric and falls disproportionately on gendered, classed, and raced laboring bodies at the bottom of the chain, usually located in the Global South. Against this backdrop, this article asks why and how pandemic discourses of stigmatization and othering largely congealed around the bodies of garment factory workers in Bangladesh. At the heart of the paper is the question of how ostensibly essential labour is *made* expendable through governmental techniques and discursive practices that draw on gendered and classed tropes with strong colonial precedents. We argue that Bangladeshi garment workers' shadow inclusion into or evacuation from this elastic and troubling category hinges on a complex assemblage of market rationalities, global supply-chain contingencies and national governmental determinations.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Pandemic, Garment Industry, Supply Chains

When the Bangladesh Inland Water Transportation Authority (BIWTA) unexpectedly announced the resumption of ferry services on 31 July 2021, migrant workers from across the country scrambled to return to Dhaka. The majority were garment factory workers responding to news that the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Employers' Association (BGMEA) had secured government permission to reopen its factories immediately. Hundreds of thousands of men and women poured into ferry terminals and bus stops (see Figure 1). At one point, all major entry points into the capital city were choked and inaccessible. Evidently the 24-hour notice, prevailing fears of the Delta variant of Covid-19 and memories of being stigmatized for 'irresponsible' behaviour the previous year (in disturbingly similar circumstances) were not enough to deter the workers. The latter's obvious desperation, corresponding scenes of 'multitudes' on the move in the Covid-19 period and the apparent indifference of the state to workers' well-being captured the imagination of social media and the public alike. Viral images of a seemingly endless flow of bodies crammed cheek to jowl on ferries and in rickshaws or on foot generated intense anxiety and discomfort among segments of the capital's middle- and-upper class inhabitants, fearful of the further spread of Covid-19 in their otherwise sheltered environments.

What can we learn about racialization and boundary-making projects in times of crisis from the stigma that came to be attached to these laboring bodies during the pandemic? In what ways are newly emergent forms of stigma continuous with or distinct from the social stigma to which garment workers in South Asia are subject in 'normal' times (Hewamanne 2008; Kabeer 2002; Lynch 2007; Siddiqi 2009)? How are such modes of Othering connected to the

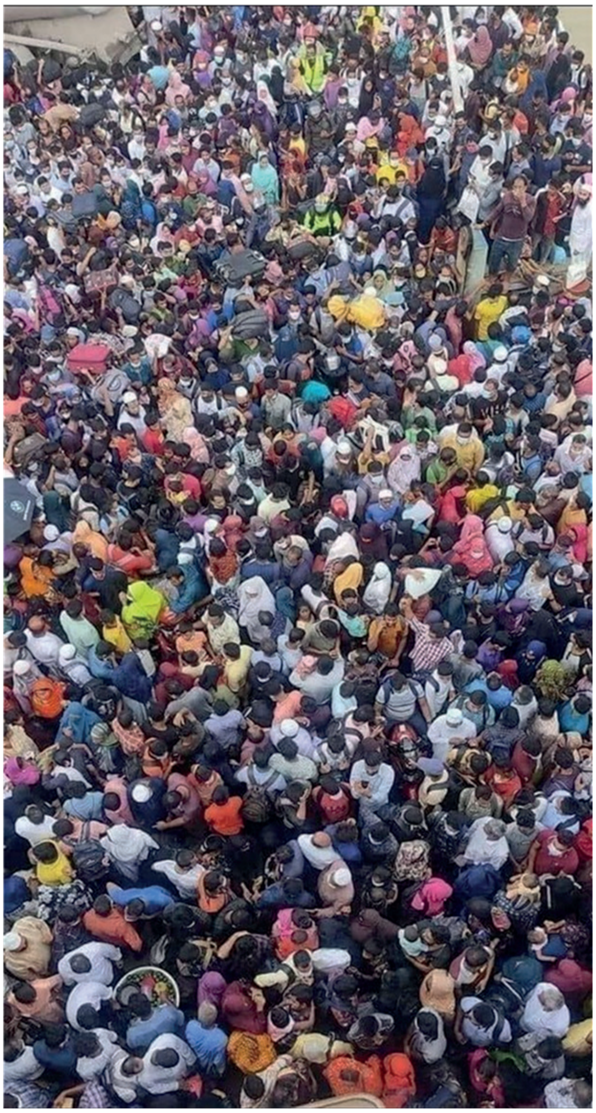

Figure 1. Garment workers on a ferry crossing the River Padma on Saturday, 1 August 2021. Source: Anonymous, on Facebook

construction of garment workers as essential at one moment and expendable at others? Finally, what does the ensuing distribution of 'blame' conceal, and what does it magnify? In what follows, these questions are addressed through a transnational, multi-scalar analytic that reveals the global dimensions of what appears to be a local or national crisis.

The Covid-19 pandemic serves as a brutal reminder of the many ways 'crises' or 'emergencies' play themselves out along existing material and ideological fault lines, even as the latter are reconfigured and structurally re-inscribed (Bonilla-Silva 2015). Corresponding to the fear, panic and uncertainty generated by pandemic conditions, 2020 saw an alarming increase in the (re)production of stigmatized bodies and communities along well-worn racial, ethnic and religious fissures (Carswell, de Neve and Yuvaraj 2020; Ruwanpura 2022; Siddiqi 2022). Like the pandemic itself, these developments have been global. Targeted as dangerous and irresponsible vectors of disease, 'Asians' in the United States, or Muslims and others (those who 'look Chinese') in India, for instance, were vilified in dominant nationalist imaginaries and frequently targeted with violence (Ahmad 2020). At the same time, mobile transnational citizens found themselves framed as racialized threats (Gill 2021). Indeed, the pandemic has produced a fertile environment for redrawing social, political and spatial boundaries of insider and outsider, normal and pathological, familiar and foreign (Ashraf and Mol 2020). Fear of the contagion's border-crossing propensities rendered suspect otherwise unmarked bodies, making them dangerous 'enemies within', as happened with expatriate populations (*probashi*) who were forced to return to Bangladesh from viral hotspots, such as Italy. As one scholar notes, the purported 'misconduct' of the *probashi*, rather than the lack of preparedness of the state, initially dominated images and imaginations of the coronavirus outbreak, in large part due to media depictions of 'ignorant, selfish, and unruly returnees' unwilling or incapable of following public health protocols (Ahasan 2020).

The pandemic also threw into sharp relief fundamental paradoxes embedded in the category of the essential worker. The very people deemed essential – so called frontline workers – also appeared to be the most dispensable and most vulnerable to the disease. There is now a substantial body of scholarship on migrant labour, essential workers and the politics of expendability and othering. Most of this work focuses on international migrants in Europe and North America. This paper moves the focus to the Global South, specifically to Bangladesh and the internal migrants who constitute the bulk of the labour force in the garment export industry.

The effects of Covid-19 dramatized yet again the fragilities and asymmetries built into global supply chains and the marginal structural location of Bangladesh – the world's second largest clothing manufacturer – within the apparel supply chain (Saxena 2017; Siddiqi 2020; Tighe 2016). It was a reminder that the distribution of risk is highly asymmetric and falls disproportionately on gendered, classed and raced laboring bodies at the bottom of the chain, usually located in the Global South (Mezzadri 2017; Miller 2013; Prentice and de Neve 2017; Wikramasinge and Coe 2021). The impact of the cancellation and non-payment of existing orders (around 90%) was immediate and devastating. In a cascade effect, hundreds of factories closed down more or less overnight, leaving over a million out of a four million strong workforce jobless or furloughed. The material consequences for the national economy and for workers in this critical industry, which accounts for around 80 percent of Bangladesh's total exports, have been well-documented (see, for instance, Anner 2020; Ali et al. 2021, Siddiqi 2020). The government and factory owners have been rightly criticized for policy decisions that prioritized safeguarding the industry over the welfare of its workers.

Little attention has been paid to the ways in which pandemic discourses of stigmatization and othering congealed in and through the bodies of garment workers, or the relationship between Bangladesh's Covid-19 containment policies and its marginal structural position in the global apparel supply chain. Represented as productive, desirable citizens in non-emergency times, garment workers found themselves deeply stigmatized and made expendable, even as the garment industry and the workers came to be hailed as essential. At the heart of the paper is the question of how ostensibly essential labor is *made* expendable through governmental techniques and discursive practices that draw on gendered and classed tropes with strong colonial precedents. These contextually and historically specific techniques and practices intersect with the global racial hierarchies embedded in apparel supply chains, contributing to the racialization of Bangladeshi garment workers as dispensable labour during the pandemic.

What logics are at work in the making of the garment industry as essential, as a zone of exception, such that exclusionary state policies and the prioritization of the 'needs' of the garment factory owners over the welfare of their workers appeared to be necessary, indeed essential, in an emergency? How do we account for what appeared to be the state's apparent refusal to manage or regulate this particular population? We approach these questions using a transnational feminist lens, taking into account the mediation of nation, race, caste/class, imperialism and geopolitics in the production of difference (Abu-Lughod 2013; Alexander and Mohanty 1996; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Tambe and Thayer 2021). At the same time, we critically foreground the relatively neglected category of class in re-animating projects of Othering and racialization in the field of Bangladesh Studies, especially in relation to an otherwise excellent body of scholarship on the garment industry that takes gender as its primary organizing category.

As we show, state 'indifference,' public health-related governance techniques, corporate rhetoric and media discourses effectively re-distributed blame for the virus on to garment workers (and to a lesser degree on to foreign returnees, that is, on migrant labor also of 'lower class' standing). The redistribution of values attached to gendered labouring bodies relied on long-standing middle-class anxieties that separate and hierarchize manual from intellectual labour. Pandemic discourses draw on and amplify an enduring grid of valuation in which working-class populations are understood to be not quite civilized or developed, always on the verge of irrationality or unruliness, and who must be disciplined accordingly. In this respect, older colonial tropes are joined to newer classed anxieties and developmentalism. These discourses are neither timeless nor stable; informed by colonial modes of exclusion and vilification, they are critically reconfigured by the neoliberal logic that structures power along the global apparel supply chain.

The pandemic has dramatically reconfigured ethnographic research methodologies. This paper is based on multiple online and offline research rather than classic ethnographic fieldwork, informed by the dictates of digital ethnography.[1] Through social media platforms such as Facebook and Tiktok, we were able to track workers' responses to shifting policy directives, as well as to "misinformation" emanating from management and mainstream media. This entailed following individual status updates at times, and at other moments, a close reading of debates on popular threads. We also collected newspaper clips from major news outlets in Bangladesh (and selected international media) for the last eighteen months and tracked coverage on private television channels on Facebook. It soon became clear that the latter reported on incidences such as police brutality toward protesting workers that were generally ignored or intentionally avoided by more corporatized mainstream media outlets. In the early months of the pandemic, we also spoke on zoom with several labour leaders and workers.

Racialized Geographies of Supply Chain Capitalism

Scholars who are attentive to questions of race have long challenged the assumption of a colourblind capitalism, positing instead that ideologies of racial difference have been co-constitutive with global capitalism (Ralph and Singhal 2019; Robinson 1983; Virdee 2018). Put differently, the maintenance of a capitalist social order hinges on the production and negotiation of social difference, including racialized difference (Jenkins and LeRoy 2019). While individual authors diverge considerably in terms of theoretical orientation, there is general agreement that racialization is a modern phenomenon and that the production of capital takes place in correspondence with the production of difference (Kim 2013; Manjapra 2020; Prentice 2015). Rooted in the conditions of imperialist expansion, (settler) colonialism and slavery, racialization has always been a deeply gendered process that polices female labour and sexuality (Morgan 2021; Virdee 2018: 12-13).

In light of the above, how might we understand the production of racialized difference in relation to the operations of transnational capital today, specifically those of apparel supply chains? With exceptions, neither the vast scholarship on globalization nor the equally prolific field of gender and development addresses questions of race in any sustained manner. In the context of South Asia, at least, this absence could be attributed to the category of race fitting 'uneasily' into prevailing notions of difference and hierarchy (Khan 2019, 87; Shroff, 2020). However, as Mishal Khan argues, '[c]apitalism has demonstrated remarkable flexibility historically, exploiting each new frontier's unique logics of exclusion and exploitation, where and how it finds them (ibid.).' It is these logics of exclusion that are of interest to us.[2]

Various iterations of the civilized/uncivilized binary, produced through infrastructures of governing, such as the law and the census, secured colonial rule in British India. With formal decolonization, these always gendered and racialized civilizational distinctions between those who were morally and physically fit to rule and those who must be governed found a robust afterlife, mapping on to the binary of developed/underdeveloped. Denise Ferreira da Silva remarks that, by the time the global development apparatus came into its own in the 1940s, notions of racial and cultural difference developed by anthropologists were part of sociological and popular common sense (da Silva 2014: 41). Race, understood as racial or cultural difference, allowed for the reinscription of older civilizational binaries. Even as race went 'underground,' it was inscribed conceptually into discourses of development, implicitly reproducing gendered spatial and social hierarchies (Siddiqi 2021; Wilson 2011: 316; see also White 2002).

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[1] https://iriss.stanford.edu/doing-ethnography-remotely; https://anthrodendum.org/2020/06/12/home-work-homework-and-fieldwork/ https://anthrodendum.org/2020/05/01/introduction-fieldwork-in-a-time-of-coronavirus-new-series/.

[2] Feminist theorists have brought analytical attention to bear on the 'layered histories' and 'uneven geographies' of capitalist expansion, disinvestment and devaluation, shedding light on how connections across space and time 'are forged through processes of disjuncture and disruption that selectively transform or *disarticulate* existing social relations and forms of production (Bair and Werner 2011: 997, emphasis added).' A disarticulation perspective offers an important entry point into interrogating the logics of exclusion and inclusion in any specific context.

Kalpana Wilson (2011) contends that racialized power relations are inherent in the world of development, and that contemporary neoliberal constructions of third-world women as especially efficient naturalize and racialize existing gendered ideologies (see also Mohanty 1984; Roy 2010). Indeed, in dominant development narratives third-world women are assumed to have an inherent gendered propensity for hard work and altruism (Wilson ibid.: 325). With the rise of 'global factories' in Asia, the Caribbean and elsewhere from the 1980s onwards, the racialization of third-world women workers drew on earlier colonial and orientalist distinctions and tropes (Ong 1987; Mohanty 2003). Here the ideal female factory worker, located in ex- and postcolonial spaces, was constructed as *naturally* submissive, repressed, dependent and docile, as numerous feminist scholars have pointed out over the last three decades (Pearson and Elson 1981; Mills 2003; Ruwanpura 2011). Corporations and policy-makers alike promoted women – and more recently girls – in the Global South as *especially suited* to assembly line work, endowed with nimble fingers, advanced hand-eye coordination and limitless patience for repetitive work (Elson and Pearson 1981; Siddiqi 1996 and forthcoming). With some exceptions, the existing literature no longer explicitly articulates these issues in terms of the biologization or racialization of women workers on the assembly line (Bonacich et al. 2008). Yet the international racial hierarchies already in place and their associated tropes of dehumanization provide a justification for super-exploitation as well as for expendability (Prentice 2015; Salzinger 2003; Werner 2014; Wright 2006). Race/racism in overt forms may be absent or explicitly frowned upon, but racial and class-based understandings of labour and geography regulate value along the supply chain.[3] They allow for the cheapening of labour and determine which lives are worthy and which dispensable at any point in time (Datta 2021; Salzinger 2003; Wright 2006; Werner 2015). It is against this backdrop that migrants from the Global South have been so easily racialized as both essential and dispensable labour during the pandemic.

The stigmatization and othering of Bangladeshi garment workers during the pandemic results from the intersection of multiple processes of racialization at different scales, and folded into contextually specific logics of inclusion and exploitation. Indigenous concepts of class/caste, colonial and Orientalist tropes of submissive, oppressed Muslim women and international racial hierarchies of third-world backwardness intersect in complex and contingent ways with gendered nationalist ideologies and contested discourses of sexuality.

A pre-pandemic headline from the Los Angeles Times, '*Bangladesh Women Find Liberty in Hard Work'*, captures perfectly the racialized assumptions and logics invoked on the scale of the global (Weiss 2014). The subheading reads: *The garment factory workers toil for paltry wages. But such jobs have also afforded Bangladeshi girls a measure of independence in a traditional Muslim society.'* Even as they are infantilized (in the slide between girls and women), the presumption at work is that 'hard labour' and 'paltry wages' are justified by the supposed liberty factory work affords. Labour is literally cheapened and otherwise objectionable working conditions made acceptable through the invocation of Bangladesh as a 'traditional Muslim society'. In this world view, Muslim women must be saved at any cost, including hard labour and paltry wages, conditions that would be unacceptable in Euro-America. The racialized trope of Muslim societies as especially backward, with little freedom for Muslim women, is used to normalize violent practices that would be deemed intolerable in other, more 'civilized' geographical spaces (Siddiqi 2009).

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[3] Context is crucial here. We do not suggest that all women workers everyhere are always considered to be disposable. Goger et al. 2014 and Ruwanpara and Hughes 2015 offer counter examples to discourses of disposability in Sri Lanka and Pakistan respectively. In this paper, our aim is to understand how and why in the particular context of Bangladesh, where garment workers are often hailed as national heroes, constructions of their subjectivities can so easily slide into expendability.

These racializing discourses intersect with classed and sexualized Bengali tropes to further cheapen labour and the value of those who labour in Bangladesh, where the gendered labouring body is the site of deeply ambivalent and contradictory nationalist pride (Siddiqi 2009, 2020; Sen 2020). However else they are marked socially – Hindu, Chakma, Muslim, or Bengali – the body of the Bangladeshi garment worker signifies a specific set of classed and sexualized nationalist anxieties. On the one hand, as key protagonists in the story of Bangladesh's economic and social development, the labour of these women's bodies represents and enacts neoliberal aspirations to achieve women's empowerment. On the other hand, as sexed labouring bodies, these women are always already suspect, their visibility and mobility disruptive of urban middle- and upper-class sensibilities and socio-spatial hierarchies. As a result, within the national space of Bangladesh, female garment workers have long oscillated between being hailed as saviours of the nation and denounced as sexually lax lower-class others (Siddiqi 2003; see also Sara Shroff 2020). During the pandemic, this basic duality in meaning paved the way for garment workers to be hailed as 'essential' workers at one point in time and deemed expendable at another.[4]

'The essential worker', Andrew Lakoff (2020) writes, is a new form of social classification 'interacting in complex ways with existing forms of inequality.' Like so much else in our present, the origins of the concept can be traced to Cold War politics, in the idea of 'essential critical infrastructure' and techniques of classification arising from the world of national security planning (ibid.). As such, the category is an elastic one, with considerable interpretive flexibility, expanding or contracting in relation to shifting contexts on an ad hoc basis. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, anthropologists have paid particular attention to the work that the idea of essential worker and related notions of sacrifice does. Drawing on the situation in the United States in the first few months of the pandemic, Brown and Pearson (2020) argue that 'essential' had become a synonym for expendable, and that the sacrifice of 'essential workers' had been normalized in the name of the nation and its economy. Others have shown that the willingness of some in the US to dehumanize the aging and openly call on them to be 'sacrificed' for the sake of future generations does not necessarily resonate elsewhere (Sadruddin and Inhorn 2020). Acevido (2020) contends that the post-Covid-19 binary between essential and non-essential labor in the naming and regulation of work in the US is not so new. Protections and obligations have always been allocated based on the degree to which a particular job is considered essential. In her view, what has shifted is the referent: essential to whom? Rather than just the employer, 'essential labor' now refers to 'tasks that are essential to *society*' (ibid., emphasis added). This means, among other things, that an essential worker is obliged to work under the riskiest of conditions, without recourse, such that involuntary labor can then be cast as voluntary sacrifice. Acevido opens up urgent questions of what labour is truly essential for whom, and we would add, who has the authority or power to determine the lines between essential and inessential labor, or even what constitutes society.

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[4] The feminist literature on expendability is very much more nuanced that the binary analysis above suggests (Goger, Dutta, Hughes and Ruwanpura). We delve into this literature later in the paper. Here we make a particular point about the Bangladeshi context and its normative conceptions of who is and is not considered expendable at specific moments in time.

In a recent essay, Scauso et al. (2020) argue that the spectre of colonialism has made a 'spectacular (re)appearance' during the present pandemic (ibid.: 82). Colonial continuities can be seen not only in the myriad forms of inequality, discrimination and violence exposed, but also in the exclusionary responses of the state and society (Bhaskaran, Datta and Naidu 2021; Carswell and De Neve 2020). Such responses, they contend, mirror colonial vilification of natives, characterized as 'treacherous,' 'filthy' and 'unsanitary,' during the pandemics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Further, they note that egregious and ongoing material injustices are often hidden behind notions such as progress, even as ideal subjectivities (such as citizens) are constructed against racialized, gendered and geographical others. Enduring colonial logics sutured to neoliberal forms of reason and valuation produce a framework in which 'historical inequalities appear natural, necessary, or [a] temporary problem,' that will be solved eventually by 'the magic of trickle-down benefits (ibid.: 84).'

A similar logic is at work in Bangladesh, where recourse to a 'magical' narrative of progress and economic development renders the garment industry essential (Murshid 2020). Though it was not explicitly defined as such, garment work was essential work in pre-Covid-19 Bangladesh (see below for details). The garment sector looms large in the middle-class imaginary; as the second largest exporter of clothing in the world, next only to China, Bangladesh's garment industry is a source of considerable nationalist pride (Siddiqi 2022; Siddiqi 2020). The 'health' of the industry is critical for any government in power, since it brings in the bulk of foreign revenue. Globally, the three million young women who labour in the garment factories literally embody the success of neoliberal capitalist development and associated empowerment discourses.

From Disposable to Empowered but Expendable?

How might we think through the relationship between 'essential worker' as a political category and the ostensible disposability of female labour in global garment production? In this regard, Lamia Karim remarks that in Bangladesh the poor in general are regarded as disposable bodies that will bear the burden of modernization and the costs of development (Karim 2014). By extension, the exploitation of bodies rendered disposable can be reframed as a necessary sacrifice for the nation. In her classic text, Melissa Wright traces the making of myths of the third world woman's disposability under global capitalism through managerial discourses in particular (Wright 2006). Building on Wright's insights, feminist scholars have revised and nuanced the idea of workers as expendable or disposable. Among other things, scholars insist that the logic of disposability is not a necessary relationship; rather, it is 'produced and reproduced through specific historical and geographical contexts of social difference' (Goger 2013: 2642). Attention to specificity has led to research that shows considerable variation across national spaces in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Goger 2013; Mezzadri 2017; Ruwanpura and Hughes 2016). Studies of the Sri Lankan garment industry where, like Bangladesh, women constitute the bulk of the labor force show that disposability discourses take the form of moral panics, of the stigmatization of garment workers as a threat to national morality (Goger 2013; Hewamanne 2008; Lynch 2007). At the same time, feminist scholars have drawn attention to the contradictory effects of disposal logic. For instance, in the face of labor shortages, managers in Sri Lanka routinely mobilize discourses of empowerment, 'to disarticulate the myth of disposability' at least for that moment in time (Goger 2013: 2641; Ruwanpura 2021).

In Bangladesh too, disposability myths are deployed through managerial discourses and practices, rearticulating worker subjectivities in the process. More specifically, the language of sexual morality and the language of class converge to produce stigma around the body of the female garment worker (Siddiqi 1996). At the same time, at the level of the government or the BGMEA (the official body representing the industry), the logic of disposability is replaced by imperial and liberal feminist myths of empowerment, especially of Muslim women (see Siddiqi 2021). Empowerment and expendability do not contradict each other in Bangladesh. Here it is worth taking into consideration another binary, that between replaceable and irreplaceable. The 'elastic supply of labor' means that individual workers are interchangeable, as easily discarded and replaced as the cheap clothing they manufacture. Yet, the industry itself is public-facing. Routinely confronted with global and national opprobrium, managers, factory owners and the state mobilize discourses of empowerment and upliftment on the shop floor, as well as in political and social discourse, even as their practices produce expendability. What appears to be distinctive about the logic and discourses of disposability in the time of Covid-19 is that social stigma attaches to both male and female labouring bodies. Inflected by the vocabulary of class distinctions, the moral panic that ensues is minimally gendered or sexualized.

Making Garment Industry Essential

By what logic does an industry that exports clothing become essential, including under conditions of crisis? What makes labour associated with the industry expendable?

Preconditions for positioning Bangladesh's garment industry in a zone of exception had been in place long before the pandemic 'played havoc' with global garment supply chains. Observant citizens and visitors may have noticed a variety of trucks and microbuses speeding through the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong and Narayanganj, deftly weaving though the dense mixed traffic, with the phrase 'On Emergency Export Duty' boldly painted on their sides (see Figures 2 and 3). Here is how a 2013 story on National Public Radio in the US described the existence of these 'emergency' vehicles:

> The streets of Chittagong, Bangladesh, are overcrowded with cars, rickshaws, and big trucks. Traffic can be a serious problem for clothing manufacturers that need to get their shipments to the port on time, so the big garment factories here use special vehicles to cut through the traffic. The marking 'Emergency Export Duty' gives these trucks the same rights as ambulances: They don't have to follow any traffic laws and they can use alternate routes when roads are closed. *The timeliness of a T-shirt order is this city's livelihood.* [5]

The quote above nicely captures the centrality of the temporal – the heightened urgency in which all steps of garment export production seem to be wrapped. Indeed, time is a key structuring element in garment workers' experiences on and off the factory floor. Covid-19 or no Covid-19, if a factory is open, workers are expected to report for work at 8 am sharp. Late arrivals, even by a few minutes, are recorded on a time-card, and three late arrivals can result in a one-day wage cut. Time is a source of tremendous anxiety for workers and a disciplinary mechanism for management. Indeed, it was the fear of being late, and thus of lost wages or even of dismissal, that prompted the mass exodus of workers from their villages to Dhaka city on 1 August 2021, as described in the opening section of this essay.

The NPR story, authored in the months after the Rana Plaza collapse, takes for granted what constitutes emergency duty, and for whom. It does not question why the system as such is pressed into protecting and maximizing profits and minimizing losses for individual factory owners.[6]

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[5] **https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2013/09/04/218890986/where-a-truck-full-of-t-shirts-gets-the-same-privileges-as-an-ambulance**, emphasis added.

[6] One feature of the asymmetrical distribution of risk and power along the supply chain is that brands hold suppliers fully liable for any disruption or delay in shipment delivery. Late deliveries result in lower payments and risk cancellation of the entire order. Minimizing traffic related delays is therefore imperative for individual owners, who must otherwise pay for much steeper air shipment costs to make on time delivery.

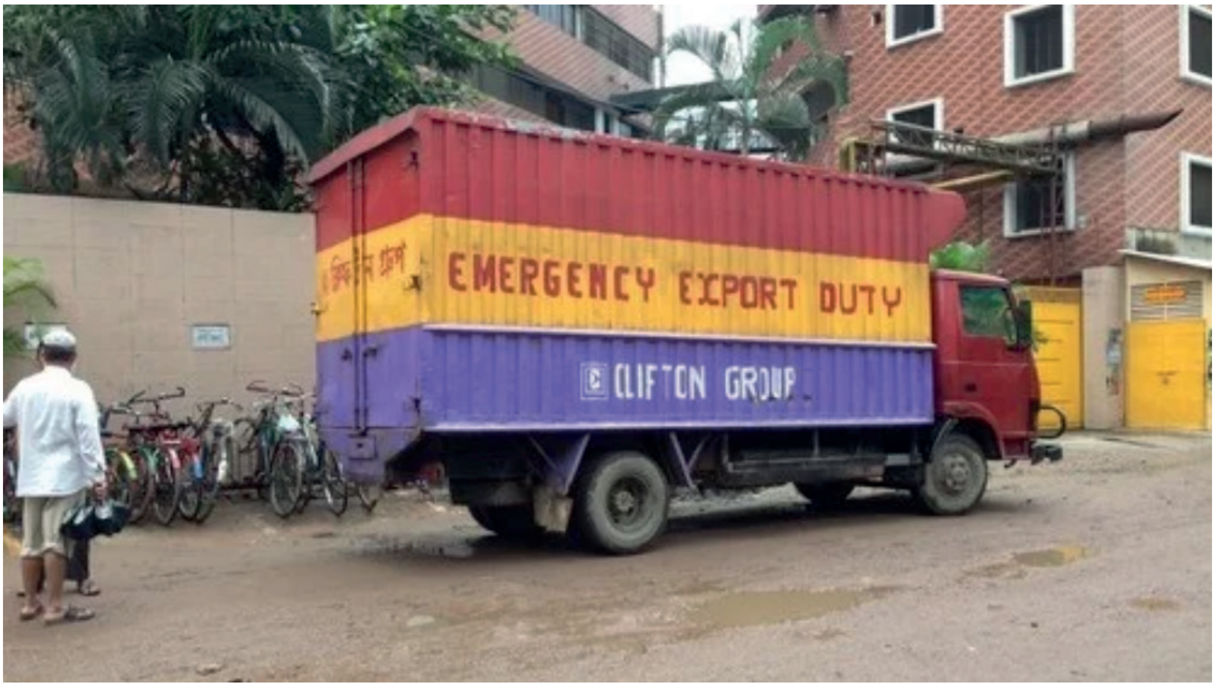

Figure 2 Source: https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2013/09/04/218890986/where-a-truck-full-of-t-shirts-gets-the-same-privileges-as-an-ambulance

What renders the production of goods for export, and the private profits thereby earned, a performance of national duty? What is obscured by the logic that citizens have a duty to make a profit, for both self and nation? What narratives are naturalized by the assumption that meeting private shipping deadlines constitutes an emergency of national scope, that private profits must be protected for the sake of the nation, rather than squandered in time wasted on jam-packed streets? Granting these vehicles the same rights as ambulances clearly suggests that the health of the nation, its lifeblood, is at stake in the timely shipment of garments. By this logic, the health and wealth/pride of the nation and its citizens are inextricably linked with the health of the garment industry; saving the garment sector stands in for serving and saving the economy. Here we see neoliberal modes of governance and reason at work. The duty of private citizens, i.e., garment workers, to profit for the nation hinges on the promise of a trickle-down economic policy, of prosperity for all through unlimited economic growth. It also creates a particular distribution of value in which making a profit at all costs takes priority. This neoliberal criterion of value justifies and naturalizes historical and contemporary conditions of inequality (Scauso 2020 et al.). In literal terms, the health of the national economy and that of the living, breathing individual garment worker is never commensurate. Unlike the clothes they produce, and no matter what the shipping deadline, garment workers are never entitled to emergency modes of transportation.

The folding of national interest into the fate of Bangladesh's garment industry – the logic of emergency and national duty – allowed the Bangladeshi government and the powerful industrial body, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Owners Association (BGMEA), to position the industry as essential during the lockdown. By extension, those labouring in garment factories could be understood as essential workers, even if the term was never used formally. The irony is that to be classified as essential in the time of Covid-19 is a risk rather than a privilege.

Bangladeshi garment workers' shadow inclusion into or evacuation from this elastic and troubling category hinges on a complex assemblage of market rationalities, global supply-chain contingencies and national governmental determinations. On the one hand, the rationality under-

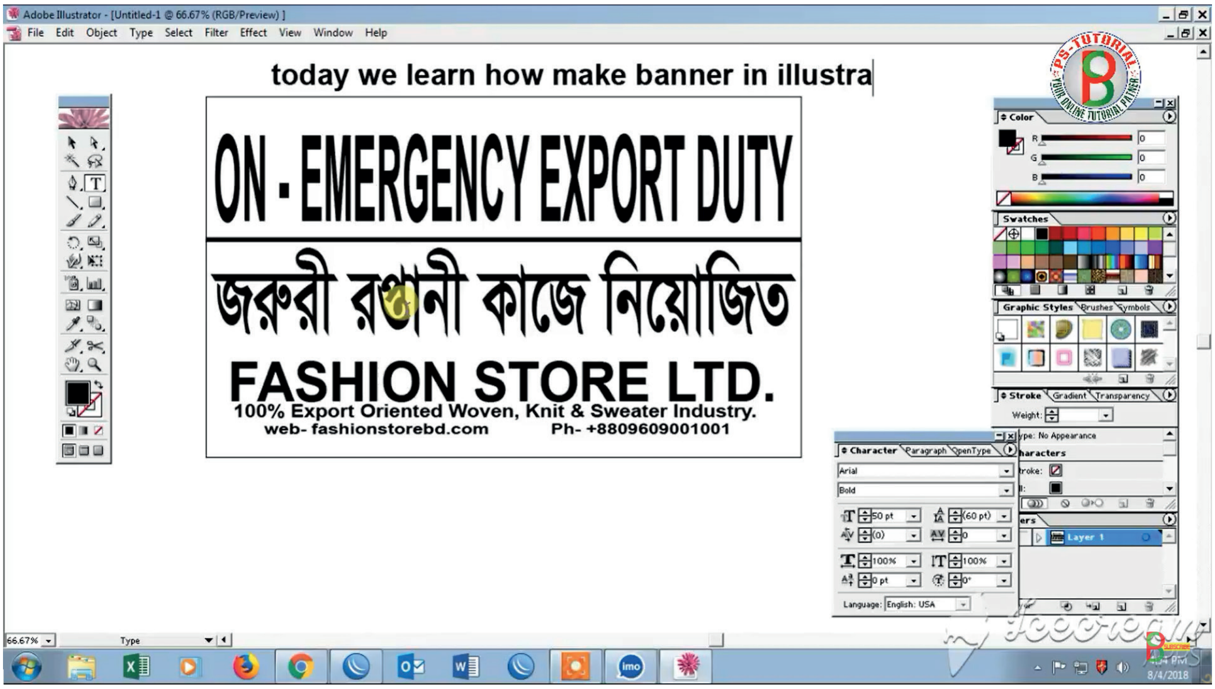

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Figure 3 Source: YouTube site targeted for a Bangladeshi audience, offering tutorials on using the program Illustrator. The choice of banner contents in the advertisement is telling.[7]

lying economization ascribes value to lives that serve the purpose of the national economy. One the other hand, the purpose of serving the economy superseded the necessity to protect the lives of individual workers. It is reasonable to ask what it is that changed with Covid-19 if garment work was already considered essential work. If only temporarily, the pandemic made visible quite literally the essential expendability of a working population otherwise hailed as national heroes, thus bringing to the fore a distilled version of the underlying logic at work.

Refusal to Regulate or the Ineptitude of Power[8]?

While formal Covid-19 management in Bangladesh largely pivoted around the figure of the foreign returnee, it was the garment workers, not the industry, that appear to have been the object of concerted non-management. This apparent failure to govern and manage calls for an examination beyond the state's 'spectacular inefficiency' in managing the pandemic, examples of which abound (see Chowdhury 2020). Its bears asking who benefitted and how from the uncertainty and 'regime of confusion' that ensued.

Between the end of March and early April 2020, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed issued 31 separate directives on how to govern the lives of Bangladeshi citizens under pandemic conditions. These executive orders and a corresponding General Holiday – governmental euphemism for a lockdown – conspicuously avoided mentioning the garment export sector. This was a curious absence, given the apparel industry's disproportionate significance to the national economy and self-image, as well as its four million-strong workforce of largely female migrants from rural Bangladesh. Unstated but implicit was the assumption that the industry and its workers constituted a zone of exception (Agamben 2005; Cotula 2017). The state's apparent refusal to regulate produced uncertainty and hardship. Upon news of the General Holiday, most garment workers left Dhaka city for the safety and affordability of their village homes. Just days later, many of the same workers were instructed by their employers to return to work immediately, unless they were willing to forfeit owed wages, or risk losing their jobs. With full knowledge that they would endanger themselves and others, thousands of men and women prepared to retrace their steps back to the place they had just left behind (Sabur and Arifeen 2020; Siddiqi 2022). The fear of retrenchment, even without receiving outstanding payment, compelled workers to 'defy' the lockdown openly and visibly. In the absence of public transportation – halted for the time being – they made their way largely on foot, often for hundreds of kilometres. Within days of reporting back to work the government abruptly ordered all factories to shut down production. Workers who had rushed to the city to protect their livelihoods found themselves trying to leave again. Many of the same workers were called back a second time, only for the factories to close down again.[9]

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[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SoT0YDTC-E last accessed July 30, 2021.

[8] We have borrowed the title of a powerful op-ed: 'Covid-19: The Ineptitude of Power' by Seuty Sabur and Shehzad M. Arifeen in *The Daily Star*, Saturday 4 April 2020. The authors' analysis and sentiment correspond to our analysis here.

While civil-society groups condemned the callousness of the state and factory owners, the workers' (forced) mobility had deeply stigmatizing outcomes. Images of densely packed makeshift forms of transport, of flows of people on foot, all apparently rejecting quarantine protocols, quickly gave rise to rumour, stigma and othering. Mobility (albeit coerced) in this time of general containment generated profound fear, suspicion and mistrust.

The impossible choices workers faced – the risk of contracting the virus or losing their jobs, the risk of dying of starvation or of the virus – were obscured by a discourse through which they came to be identified as major vectors of disease and stigmatized as reckless, selfish and wilfully endangering the lives of others. Landlords turned away imagined or actually sick tenants. Cast as undisciplined bodies disrupting and polluting safe spaces, many of those returning to villages also faced rejection and violence. The crisis of 'social distancing' in keeping the factories open had become a crude form of 'class distancing'. This re-distributed 'blame' constituted the real emergency for garment workers.

A number of unsuccessful lockdowns followed. These multiple and failed lockdowns not only fuelled ongoing regimes of (im)mobility,' they determined who was allowed to be mobile (those with special passes) and who was forced into mobility or immobility (primarily garment workers).

It could be argued that the state's navigation of what was undeniably a fluid, unpredictable and rapidly shifting situation was complicated by the inconsistencies between state policy and factory owners' interests. Instructions from the BGMEA or individual factory owners to report to work directly contradicted public health messages to contain or limit movement, leading to confusion among workers and the troubled mobilities that were the source of their social stigmatization. Yet, from the outset, the government left critical loopholes even when it declared a full shutdown, allowing factories with 'proper health facilities on site' to stay open throughout the so-called General Holiday. This is hardly surprising, given the blurred lines between state and capital that many scholars have pointed out (Miller 2014; Saxena 2014; Tighe 2016). The mainstream corporatized media, which actively shaped public discourse on the pandemic's effects on the industry, minimized the consequences for workers, effectively producing public consent to keep factories open to 'save the nation's lifeline'.

Government silence and the explicit refusal to name the sector in its numerous directives turned out to be critical tools for the industry and allowed maximum flexibility on the part of individual factory owners, who were already under considerable stress from the cascade of cancelled orders and unpaid shipments. Even as official BGMEA commentary blamed workers for defying explicit instructions to stay in place, workers received text messages and phone calls from factory managers instructing them to return 'on time.'

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[9] Naomi Hossain contends that 'moral economy' thinking and a strong sense that the state is responsible for protecting people during crises shapes citizens' expectations, in turn consolidating or undermining the state's legitimacy (Hossain 2017). In other words, 'a powerful set of expectations about the rightful behavior of ruling elites in times of crisis, shapes public policy to a significant if somewhat invisible degree' (Ali et al. 2021: 105216). It is not clear the extent to which garment workers hold such expectations or trust any particular government, though perhaps expectations of 'relief' constitute a broader world view among citizens (see Winters et al.).

Here it is worth recalling the kind of time pressure that the 'just in time' production on which the global garment supply chain thrives places on suppliers in the Global South. In response to a precipitous decline in consumer demand, Euro-American buyers of Bangladeshi garments had cancelled or postponed orders worth $1.44 billion by the end of March 2020. Most refused to pay for cancellations, even when goods had been shipped and delivered (Anner 2020a: 5-6). Some retailers demanded steep discounts on orders that had already been produced at prices that were already some of the lowest in the world. With little negotiating power, and out of a fear of alienating future clients, few owners were willing to challenge the cancellations or demands for discount openly. The one exception, Mostafizuddin, whose factory supplied denim to high-end retailers, called such demands blackmail: 'That means I am making the jeans for free and my workers made the jeans for free. It's blackmail' (quoted in Pham 2020: 318).

Supply-chain contingencies (international orders that continued to trickle in or dry up) and the 'whims' of individual owners ultimately determined whether or not production would continue. In this light, the official refusal to regulate does not appear to be incidental but a conscious policy decision. Notably, while the government allocated a substantial sum of money to the garment sector as part of a post-Covid-19 stimulus package (which covered the first month of outstanding wages only), absolutely no provisions were made to vaccinate garment-workers as a part of a population of 'essential workers'. The rationality underlying the GoB's (non) decision-making is not hard to discern – the logic that the well-being of the collective/nation depends upon the health of the economy, which in turn relies on the smooth functioning of the garment supply chain. In this calculus, timely shipments and profit-making constituted the emergency; considerations of individual worker health ranked much lower. This was a lockdown in which the value of making shipments on time exceeded the value of the lives of individual garment workers. This is the conjuncture at which the different layers of structural constraint faced by garment workers – the local, the regional, the national and the global – converge.

An anonymous reviewer for this article remarked that the trajectory of Covid-19 in Bangladesh was marked by temporal specificities; by extension, neither the state nor citizens exhibited singular responses. While this is indeed the case, what strikes us is the repetition and recursivity of government and BGMEA actions—factories declared open without much notice, shut down production with even less warning. This re-iterability seems to be specific to the garment industry.

The Pandemic and Its Disorders: Colonial Continuities

Perhaps in a bid to stem criticism of its handling of the pandemic, at certain moments the BGMEA invoked explicitly classed language. Then President Dr Rubana Huq declared at one point that '*sromikder shorire ekta alada shokti thake,*' which roughly translates as 'working class bodies possess a distinct kind of strength.' Colonial tropes of effeminate middle-class *bhadralok* Bengalis, too effete for manual labour, are turned around here to assert that working-class bodies are biologically less vulnerable to disease. The idea of working people possessing exceptional or singular strength maps on to widely shared middle-class tropes of divisions between mind and body. As noted earlier, historically, labouring bodies have been imagined in opposition to the *bhadrolok* classes. When asked why employees should not be paid even if factories remain closed, owners frequent invoked the phrase *'sromik pala'* (literally rearing or bringing up workers, as in animal husbandry) to mark their relations to their workers. The verb *pala* is used generally with reference to pets or poultry, as in raising pets, raising children in the abstract, or fostering an inferior dependent. The implication is that paying wages under emergency conditions would be equivalent to treating workers like pets, who expect to be fed and housed but offer nothing in return. Here workers are constructed not as agentive contract bearers but in a relationship of dependence made possible only by the generosity of the owner. The lines between humans and animals become blurred in this imagery, even as racialized class lines are sharpened. Dehumanized and animalized, their subjectivities as workers with rights protected by unions or the state are completely erased. Bestiary tropes, as Frantz Fanon noted long ago, are critical to drawing lines between civilized and uncivilized. Colonial racialized tropes of the lazy native are also folded into *bhadralok* constructions of the labouring classes. In relation to paying wages, a question that workers and labour advocates faced repeatedly is why and for how long factory owners should 'support workers to sit idle and eat'. It is difficult to capture the layers and the nuances of '*boshe boshe khawano*,' a Bengali term that implies laziness and exploiting hospitality. Elora Chowdhury reports that labour organizer Taslima Akter was asked a version of this question on live television (Chowdhury 2020: 619). Such 'misrecognition' is made possible by prior associations and markers of class and labour. The English term 'freeloaders' comes closest to capture the meaning of both *sromik pala* and *boshe boshe khawa.* Here we see a complex intersectionality at work -- colonial racial tropes intersecting with classed and gendered discourses to produce a narrative that valorizes otherwise exploitative working conditions and constructs workers as non-agentic and animal-like, in need of paternalist disciplining.

The cultural and political category of *bhadralok* was crystallized in nineteenth-century colonial Bengal, as an increasingly English educated, professional and salaried urban middle income group, largely upper-caste Hindu, sought to distance itself from 'backward' agricultural and cultivating classes, who came to be seen as *chotolok* (literally 'small people'). As an emergent category, *bhadralok* self-presentation hinged on the rejection of manual labour, especially ploughing and cultivating the fields. Manual work set the boundary between those who associated themselves with the life of the mind and the so-called lower orders, the latter associated with unruliness and sexual/moral laxity. This took place at a time when Hinduism itself was undergoing redefinition, so that the binary between elite and non-elite also separated intellectual labour from ritual practices considered the work of *chotolok*. In short, *bhadralok* subjectivities were constituted through and against caste/classed, gendered, and sexualized others. This form of indigenous othering intersects with the racialized hierarchy in the global garment industry, contributing to the social stigmatization and troubled mobility trajectories of female garment workers in Bangladesh.

Bhadralok status refers to an ethos or world view as much as it does class or status (Roy 2016: 23). What might be called *bhadralok* sentiment or mentality saturates everyday interactions in contemporary Bangladesh, not least in phrases such as 'arguing like a rickshaw wallah's wife' (that is, in an 'uncultured', 'unladylike' manner, within hearing of the public, with no sense of propriety or privacy) or 'made-up like a garment worker' (a reference to garish make-up and clothing, aspiring to but failing to emulate middle class tastes). Class boundaries are constantly secured through such gendered and sexualized tropes.

Gender and class hierarchies materialized through spatial disciplining and distancing map on to dominant development and middle-class concerns over subaltern others. These discursive and spatial techniques of discipline have long enduring colonial legacies. Dhaka city has always had containment zones carved out on the basis of class: the elite Gulshan residential area is now proudly a 'beggar-free' zone, and the diplomatic zone of Baridhara was declared Lungi-free[10] for a while (Begum 2020; Habib 2014; Lata 2020). These zones of containment, like urban planning practices in general in Bangladesh, are rooted in colonial modes of planning and dividing up the city (Baffoe and Roy 2022). They echo colonial urban-management practices that carved out spaces marked by racial and class segregation. The expulsion of 'undesirable' populations in the name of beautification or for ostensibly health and sanitation purposes also has its roots in colonial management ideologies (Chhabria 2019). In this backdrop, one scholar insists that official contempt for the poor constitutes a major feature of urban governance in Bangladesh today (Lata 2020). In her words, cities such as Dhaka, 'the poor do not fit well with a new urban vision', being subject instead to discourses that portray them as criminals, producers of filth and encroachers (ibid.: 4). [11] Expendable labour, even if it is also essential, must be contained in particular zones, slums being the most obvious. The project of disciplining and keeping out working-class bodies is explicit and open in contemporary Bangladesh.

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[10] A sarong like garment for men, in which a host of ambivalent meanings, norms and practices are em-

'Garment Workers' Lives Don't Matter?'

The second wave of Covid-19 in 2021 coincided with the month of Ramadan. Over the years, it has become practice for garment workers to labor for longer hours than usual at this time, in anticipation of a long break at the end of the month for Eid. Workers consent to a form of hyper-exploitation, working even on the weekly holiday of Friday, with these extra hours counted as 'general duty' rather than as overtime. This much-anticipated annual break is a time for reuniting with family left behind in villages, and literally repairing bodies depleted from the wear and tear of factory work.

In 2021, at the last minute, the BGMEA announced that workers would be granted only a three-day holiday including the day of Eid itself. This would have effectively precluded most workers from returning to their villages. The resistance and fury was immediate. Faced with a different kind of containment, workers organized spontaneous protests demanding full pay before Eid. The response from the state was equally unequivocal. In Gazipur police disrupted a peaceful demonstration and opened fire on workers without provocation (see Figure 4). At least twelve workers were hospitalized, and many were badly injured from beatings.

Workers' voices and resistance have been most legible in the numerous Facebook pages set up since the pandemic. In their individual Facebook statuses, as well as in various groups formed during the pandemic, despairing workers wondered why 'Garment Workers' Lives Don't Matter.' Online media was also the site of expressions of resistance. We reproduce below an especially powerful Facebook post that circulated widely at the time:

> *'Those [workers] who are saying, the factories are now opened, but how can I come without any form of transport, here is my two cents,*
>
> *This 'you' will come to the factory no matter what, on foot, walking for 24 hours without sleeping, endless changes of short distances, that industry owners already know. Workers will surely show up regardless of the lockdown or availability of transport. If it were the case that no one showed up for work, then owners would think about the lack of transport before reopening the factories. We had better fix ourselves first, before making comments like that. Until we re-make ourselves properly, the government and industry owners will continue to make fools of us.'*

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bedded. Celebrated as an informal 'national dress' for men in Bangladesh, it is everyday wear for urban working-class men and rural peasants. *Bhadralok*/urban elites eschew it in public, though they may use it in domestic spaces. In this context, its attempted abolition was tied its association as not-modern.

[11] Dhaka's working-class migrant population reside in over 4000 slums, and are routinely subjected to violent evictions legalized through reconstituted versions of colonial era vagrancy laws. This form of accumulation by dispossession often occurs in the name of hygiene and orderliness. In January 1975, under the auspice of a 'Clean Dhaka' rehabilitation project, nearly 200 thousand people were forcibly relocated to the fringes of the city. In the 1980s during military rule, the second author recalls that it was common for police to pick up "vagrant" children from Dhaka streets and forcibly detain them in shelters.

Laced with sarcasm, the above post can be read as simultaneously a lament and a 'call to arms'. These few lines capture with economy the basic structural predicament with which workers must contend, underscoring the compulsions and regimes of valuation that separate garment workers from others, not just in moments of crisis but in 'normal' times as well. The power of this post lies in the author's recognition of worker agency and implicit call to reject managerial discourses that amplify relations of dependence. Instead of the usual appeal to either the state or the owners of capital, the post addresses workers directly, holding them responsible, refusing passivity. In restoring workers' agency, the author opens the possibility of collective action and meaningful social and political transformation.

Conclusion: Troubled Mobilities and Moral Panics

This essay builds on existing feminist scholarship on women's labour and disposability in global garment production. It denaturalizes the 'exceptional' moment of the pandemic by locating the predicament of workers within longer histories of gendered labour expendability and discourses of development within the specific context of Bangladesh. As we show, Covid-19 conditions rendered it impossible to mobilize discourses of empowerment and upliftment; the logic of expendability on which the garment industry actually operates in 'normal' times, under conditions in which workers are easily 'replaceable', became impossible to deny. If only temporarily, the pandemic made visible the expendability of a labouring population otherwise hailed as national heroes and on the path to female emancipation.

Covid-19 literalized and materialized pre-existing social fears and anxieties through the invocation of public health concerns, effectively reinforcing middle-class boundary-making projects. Racialized, gendered and classed tropes became a narrative resource to paper over the contradictions generated by the postcolonial development state and its ties to global capital, contradictions dramatized forcefully under pandemic conditions. The travails of Bangladesh's garment workers also bring to the fore the troubled concept of mobility in the contemporary moment. Movement, considered essential to modernity, can produce pathological panic in others. Following Arjun Appadurai, we could say that mobility itself becomes the disease, exhibiting a virulent quality that marks bodies as undesirable.

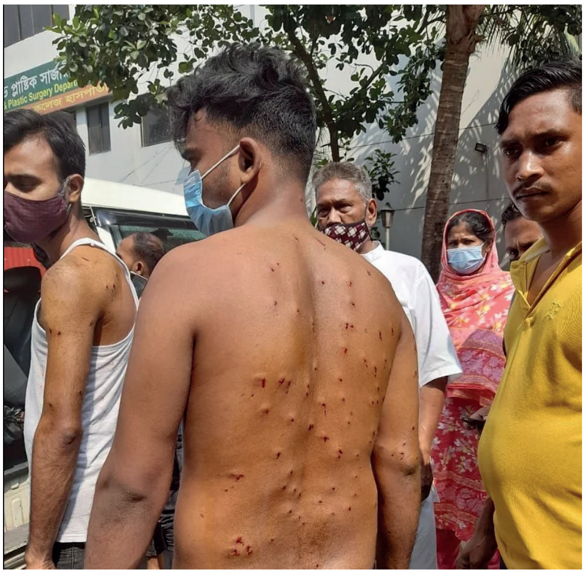

Figure 4: Wounds from rubber bullet fired at workers in Gazipur. Photo: Sheikh Sabiha Alam (Prothom Alo)

Movement becomes a method of killing, such that workers who set off en masse to secure precarious livelihoods find themselves on 'death marches'. Those on the move – immigrants, refugees, or garment workers desperately seeking refuge from a disease or seeking to save their jobs by ignoring lockdown orders – can easily become pariah citizens in the new global order. If the value of bodies is linked to the creation of wealth, then some workers must be allowed to die to save the economy and the nation.

This kind of necro-political logic ensures the oscillating construction of Bangladeshi garment workers as expendable and pathological bodies as well as productive, essential workers. Rather than asking what the lockdown prevents, it may be more productive to ask what the lockdown or so-called 'General Holiday' enabled. One thing it allowed was intensified biopolitics and multiple boundary-making projects to flourish.

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Note on the Authors

Dina M. Siddiqi is Clinical Associate Professor, Liberal Studies, New York University. Her research joins development studies and transnational feminist theory to the anthropology of labor and Islam. Her publications include 'Child Marriage in the Feminist Imagination' in Lila Abu-Lughod et al. *The Cunning of Gender Violence*, forthcoming in 2023. **dms17@nyu.edu**

Hasan Ashraf is Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh. His research focuses on transnational garment production, labour history and politics, urban water practices, and politics of infrastructure. His recent publications include an online exhibit with Christian Strümpell (2021), The Transnational Ready-Made Garment Industry in Bangladesh: Shifts and Changes, Late 1970s until Now, *Workplaces: Pasts and Presents*, Omeka RSS, 29 Nov. **hasanashraf@juniv.edu**

Covid-19 and Digital Anti-Sinophobia in Argentina*

by Clara Baumann** (University of Duisburg-Essen & IMPRS-SPCE)
and Luciana Denardi (National University of San Martín & CONICET)

Abstract

While racial discrimination against people of Asian and particularly Chinese origin is well-understood in the Global North, its dynamics in the Global South remain under-investigated. Moreover, although Covid-19 contributed significantly to the reinforcement of sinophobic stereotypes around the globe, recent research has barely paid any attention to new forms of counter-reaction, such as those that evolve in digital channels, especially in Latin America. This paper sheds light on anti-Asian racism and the digitized counter-reactions of Chinese migrants before and after Covid-19 in the crucial case of Argentina. In the past, these migrants mostly remained silent when confronted with institutional racism. However, it was precisely the outbreak of Covid-19 that contributed to the creation of new forms of empowerment on online platforms by this racialized minority and that allowed them to present their demands to state agencies and to denounce sinophobic debates on social media. Methodologically, this study combines elements of process-tracing with both traditional and online ethnographic methods to explain these trickle-up effects.

Keywords: Digital Empowerment, Sinophobia, Covid-19, Argentina, Online Ethnography

Introduction

The global outbreak of Covid-19 in December 2019 severely increased racial discrimination against Chinese communities around the world. After the first cases were discovered in the Chinese city of Wuhan, Chinese people were quickly stigmatized as scapegoats for its outbreak and global spread. In the case of Argentina, the already vulnerable Chinese and Asian minorities not only became subject to increased exclusion since the first Argentine case of Covid-19 was officially confirmed in March 2020, they also experienced increased discrimination from the very beginning of the pandemic. These dynamics of racialization were intensified by global political narratives equating Covid-19 with the 'Chinese virus', reinforced by insults and memes shared through online platforms.

Following Reeves (1983, cited by Murji and Solomos 2005: 17), we define racialization as 'a process through which race is adopted in situations in which it was previously absent', and agree that 'racialization occurs in any case where race is increasingly used descriptively'. Moreover, we understand racism as cognitive, behavioural and structural forms of reservation and discrimination against specific ethnic groups that are homogenized and associated with one or more seemingly intrinsic characteristics (see Jonas and Schmid Mast 2007). Finally, we agree with Mullings (2005: 684) in considering racism to be a relational concept that transforms perceived differences into multiple forms and struggles involving inequality, including 'subordination, stigmatization, exploitation, exclusion, various forms of physical violence, and sometimes genocide'.

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** Corresponding author. Contact: baumann@mpifg.de.

Usually, racialization derives from legacies of colonialism and imperialism, causing uneven power dynamics among different groups of society, migrants and their descendants. In this context, we define Sinophobia as one particular form of racism that is directed against people of Chinese and often Asian descent more broadly.

Before the outbreak of Covid-19 in Argentina, multiple aspects such as the strong competition between Chinese and domestic merchants and caterers, as well as cultural misunderstandings, language barriers and urban myths, had already shaped an often strong social distance between Argentinians and Chinese immigrants. This situation had already provoked numerous prejudices and anti-Chinese racial discrimination (Tang 2011). Yet, before the pandemic, only isolated responses to these racist episodes could be observed (e.g., Antonio Chang 2013). In contrast – and in line with global developments in, for example, France (Wang et al. 2020) or the UK (Yeh 2020) – during the pandemic the racialization processes described above increasingly caused counter-reactions by the formerly rather 'silent'[1] Chinese minority in Argentina (Denardi 2020). Interestingly, this movement has been especially supported by second-generation and younger Chinese immigrants between the ages of 20 and 40, who usually speak fluent Spanish and have reached high levels of education. However, first-generation and older immigrants have also followed up on their actions.

At this point, it is essential to clarify that we agree with Rubio (2021) that racism cannot simply be challenged in interpersonal relationships or by applying specific steps and measures to correct individualized behaviour.[2] On this basis, we acknowledge that the counter-reactions to sinophobic discrimination described in this study are at too early a stage to consider them an anti-racist movement. However, we consider measures to reveal, explain and correct individual behaviour, particularly in the case of the formerly silent minority of Chinese and Asian immigrants in Argentina, as crucial steps in initiating broader anti-racist movements.

While Covid-19 thus enhanced a major shift in the anti-sinophobic empowerment of Chinese communities in Argentina from individual to collective responses, the causal mechanism leading to this outcome remains black-boxed. Even less attention has been paid to the *digital* dimension as an important driver of these new waves of empowerment. However, an extensive analysis of these gaps is crucial not only in understanding contemporary processes of racialization and the effects of the pandemic on social movements, but also in exploring future opportunities for Chinese migrant communities to react to Sinophobia and reduce it.

In this study, we argue that digital channels, which gained in importance throughout the pandemic, provide a new space in which to respond to institutionalized racism. In contrast to traditional approaches to digital racism, we thus introduce the notion of *digital counter-reactions* to institutionalized racism and Sinophobia as the framework for this study and as a new concept for analysis in future research.

Based on the empirical gaps mentioned above, our research thus responds to two different strands of theoretical literature. In line with Reeves (1983, cited in Murji and Solomos 2005), we understand racialization as a form of political mobilization,[3] indicating awareness of its existence and the necessity to remove discrimination from racialized groups. On this basis, Mullings (2005) highlights the necessity to explore *new* forms of racialization that generate new types of *anti-racist* mobilization. We argue that *digital* mobilization is one of these new anti-racist dynamics: generally, the mainstream literature on digital racism explains the persistence of (Daniels 2013) or increases (Ekman 2019) in racism with reference to an online disinhibition effect (Suler 2004). In this sense, online platforms are generally analysed as fabrics enhancing (Matamoros-Fernández 2017) or denying (Nelson 2013) racist discourses. A rare exception to this trend is Rosa and Bonilla's study (2015) of the importance of hashtag usage on online platforms to enhance digital protest on Twitter as part of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement, mainly in the United States. Similarly, in this study, we show how social media can be used as a platform to organize and reduce racist discrimination. In particular, we focus on the implications of digital movements in the context of South-South migration.

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[1] The related discourse of the ''model minority'' generally refers to Chinese and other East and South-East Asian migrant groups and highlights their successful integration in their host society and its labour market, usually through hard labour and determination. Thereby, they are rarely suspected to be involved in any conflict (Lan 2016; Yeh 2020). In contrast, several of our interlocutors who were second-generation Chinese immigrants in Argentina affirmed that their parents ''did not talk too much'' about discrimination merely because ''they were immigrants in a country that had accepted them''. For these reasons, we refer to the Chinese diaspora in Argentina as a 'silent' rather than a 'model minority'.

[2] We thank our anonymous reviewers for pointing out this essential distinction.

On this basis, we aim to answer the following questions: *How can we conceptualize the gradual emergence of the digital empowerment of Chinese minorities during Covid-19 as new types of counter-reaction to institutionalized racism?* More precisely*, starting with the outbreak of Covid-19 at the end of 2019, which incidents and processes were necessary to encourage Chinese migrants and their descendants in Argentina to raise their voices against racial discrimination?*

Methodologically, we apply elements of process-tracing as proposed by Beach and Pedersen (2013). As this method is designed to explain the causes of a particularly interesting outcome, the analytical approach requires several iterative steps of both theory-testing and theory-building based on empirical observations. Specifically, we apply the variant of explaining outcome process-tracing, which, following Beach and Pedersen (2013), has as its specific goal the inductive search for a minimally sufficient explanation for a particularly puzzling outcome in a particular case. This approach allows us not only to structure our empirical results both conceptually and chronologically, and thereby to identify the different subsequent steps that were necessary for Chinese immigrants and their descendants in Argentina to organize themselves: it also enables us to understand how various gradual changes could accumulate in the outcome of organized anti-sinophobic action. This includes not only the organized defence and counteractions of Chinese immigrants themselves, but also the increasing support of them from the rest of Argentine society. In this context, conceptually, we draw on theoretical considerations of institutional change to racist discourses.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and especially Argentina, provide crucial cases for analysis for a number of reasons. On the one hand, the main foci of studies on Asian and Chinese immigration in LAC remain the often strong cultural ties of Asian emigrants to their countries of origin (e.g., see Tsuda (1999) on Japanese in Brazil), as well as their different integration strategies within their host societies (see Labarca (2015) on Chinese in Chile or Lausent-Herara (2014) on Chinese in Peru). However, their findings barely reveal how Asian immigrants in LAC experience explicit racial discrimination.

On the other hand, the literature on racialization mainly highlights the denial of racism in the region (see Dulitzky 2005), while those studies that acknowledge its existence focus on indigenous people and *mestizos* rather than immigrants from abroad (see Golash-Boza and Bonilla-Silva 2013). Data on the racialization of 'lighter-skinned groups such as Asians' in Latin America and 'white supremacy' over them remain scarce (see Sue 2009: 1062). As a rare exception, Chan and Montt Strabucchi (2021) trace how racist discrimination against Chinese immigrants has evolved in Chile along with Covid-19, and how these dynamics increased previously existing anti-Chinese sentiments in the country. While thereby providing important evidence on how the pandemic enhanced global Sinophobia, they barely pay any attention to whether Chinese communities reacted to this newly evolving racism, and if so to what extent.

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[3] We understand that the mobilization of young Chinese immigrants and their descendants aims for stronger social recognition in Argentina. This includes their claims for respectful treatment and for the de-exoticization of their communities and practices (compare Mullings' (2005: 684) categorization of social movements).

However, both racial discrimination against ethnic Chinese immigrants and their responses to these dynamics have become increasingly visible in the region and require further empirical research. Within Latin America, the atypical scope condition of an explicitly silent minority that had long been discriminated against without their resorting to political mobilization makes Argentina a particularly interesting case.

Empirically, this study is based on extensive online ethnography defined as 'the specificity of ethnographic methodology when it is carried out online, even when it does not end in nor is exhausted by it' (Di Próspero 2017: 49). Specifically, we focus on social networks that enable their users to share their thoughts, to exchange texts and images with a global audience, and to create high levels of visibility within seconds.

In Argentina, the two most popular digital platforms are Instagram and Facebook (Ovrik 2018). Based on their high reach, we thus selected these two providers as the main sources of data for this paper. Moreover, the frequent use of these two platforms by numerous Chinese immigrants in Argentina implies their intention to interact actively with the host population.[4, 5]

We collected and analysed empirical data from a sample of more than 400 related statements and discussions published by Chinese immigrants, their descendants and members of their Argentinian host society between December 2019 and June 2020. For this paper, we selected around 40 screenshots of publications with the highest analytical value for our research question, based on their detailed descriptions of current developments. Moreover, they were published by Chinese immigrants with high numbers of *followers*, whose content was frequently shared. As one general effect of Covid-19 was the extensive use of digital media to communicate, the increasing number of published statements, both racist and anti-racist, on social networks mirrored real-time developments.[6]

Historical Background: Chinese Migration to Argentina

In contrast to most Latin American countries, Chinese migration to Argentina began relatively late. First, since the late 1970s, both wealthy merchants and political refugees mainly from Taiwan came to settle in and around Buenos Aires by bringing sufficient money to buy houses and set up their own businesses. Second, throughout the 1990s, several groups of economic migrants from the economically less advanced province of Fujian came with little financial capital and high hopes of finding economic prosperity in Argentina (Denardi 2017).

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[4] To communicate with their homeland or other members of the Chinese diaspora, Chinese emigrants mainly use the (Chinese) multifunctional messaging service of *WeChat*, which enables both the exchange of private messages and the dissemination of public posts. Hence, their use of Instagram and Facebook reveals their need to communicate with people outside these communities.

[5] Although no official data on the number of active Chinese users of social networks in Argentina have been collected to date, the large number of their shared groups on Facebook, as well as their numerous individual members, indicate a high level of resonance (e.g., ''阿 根廷華人互助會， Grupo de ayuda mutua para chinos en Argentina, armonia mundial 小组'': over 2,500 members (**https://www.facebook.com/groups/argentinachinos/**); ''Cultural Chino Argentina'': over 5,300 members (**https://www.facebook.com/groups/27556186068/**), last retrieved: 17.02.2022).

[6] To avoid potential research biases that could derive from automatically created algorithms on online platforms, first, we included a wide range of 400 different screenshots from numerous Chinese people of diverse backgrounds. Second, we not only analysed the personal accounts of individual persons but verified our findings through the observation of more general discussions in *Facebook* groups, which unite diverse members and opinions of the Chinese communities in Argentina.

After the Argentine economic crisis of 2001, these initial settlers were followed by an estimated 200,000 immigrants from mainland China. Lacking Spanish language skills, they focused on opening small supermarkets selling domestic Argentinian groceries. While these activities led to the urban dispersal of the former Chinese 'community', they also increased their competition with domestic merchants. As well as facing strong cultural and linguistic barriers separating them from the host society, these Chinese supermarket owners quickly became the targets of racist prejudices and discrimination (Denardi 2017).

Finally, throughout the 2010s, Chinese multinational companies (MNCs) gradually began to enter the Argentinian market, often bringing highly trained professionals from China with them. Yet, due to their status as temporary residents, these new immigrants generally remained separated from the Argentinian host society (Denardi 2017).

To date, an estimated 80 percent of all Chinese immigrants in Argentina consist of supermarket owners and their employees, while the remaining 20 percent mainly include employees of Chinese MNCs and individuals engaging in the import and export sectors (unofficial data provided by our interlocutors).

In the past, to protect themselves from racial discrimination, these different immigrant groups generally engaged in welfare activities, such as donating money to hospitals and poor neighbourhoods, rather than engaging in public protest. Moreover, the lack of support by official Chinese agencies speaking out against discrimination complicated the organization of structured movements other than fragmented responses or charity work. However, we suggest that this situation is changing with the younger generations, who were born in Argentina, speak fluent Spanish and Chinese, and grew up within a highly agitated Argentine environment shaped by struggles for human rights and mutual respect.

Theoretical Background

Institutionalized Racism in Argentina

Following Djelic and Quack (2008: 300), we define institutions as 'those collective frames and systems that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour and social interaction and take on a rule-like status in social thought and action', as well as 'tools and resources enabling action'. On this basis, to disentangle the different dimensions enhancing the organized anti-sinophobic initiatives of the Chinese community in Argentina, it is useful to approach racism from an institutionalist perspective. First, we follow España Eljaiek (2017: 31) in her general definition of racial exclusion as 'sets of relationships' and 'an informal dynamic institution [entailing] permanent conflicts and tensions and simultaneous processes of institutional change and reinforcement'. Second, we identify specific elements of 'traditional' institutional racism directed against Chinese immigrants in Argentina.

According to Carmichael et al. (1992: 4), institutional racism is characterized by 'far more subtle' forms of discrimination that are more widely tolerated than individually expressed racism. Historically, institutionalized forms of racism included both general prejudices and the resulting discriminatory behaviour, as well as concretely manifested state acts (e.g., Bourne 2001: 9-10) that reinforce the benefits of the 'white' members of a society vis-à-vis other ethnic minorities (Better 2008). More specifically, institutional racism is characterized by repetitive *patterns* of both the acceptance and reinforcement of white supremacy via different institutions: these often relate to economic, social and psychic advantages and are generally manifested by both formal and informal policies and laws (ibid.).

The discourse of 'whiteness' in Argentina is important for understanding the racialized dynamics in the country. According to Lan (2011) the racialization of Chinese migrants is mediated by the racialization of other minorities. The basis of these 'overlapping racializations' (ibid.: 7) dates back to colonial times and the myth that Argentines 'descended from the boats' bringing white Europeans to the country (Sutton 2008: 107). On this basis, throughout the following centuries, the Argentine authorities consistently encouraged the arrival of both these initially white colonialists and the white immigrants who followed them. In contrast, other ethnic minorities, including indigenous people, non-white immigrants and their descendants labelled as 'others', were increasingly excluded, which reinforced white supremacy. In particular, the Argentine state fostered racism, initially through multifaceted policies such as strict immigration laws, military campaigns and discriminating narratives against foreign and non-white residents. Moreover, even with the gradual inclusion of anti-racist laws in the Argentine legal landscape, protective measures have barely been implemented (ibid.).

While these general dynamics apply to most non-white ethnicities, Chinese immigrants appear to be among the most severely affected minorities by both institutional and individual racism and exclusion in Argentina (Adaszko and Kornblit 2008). The absence of any concrete state action to counter these dynamics is a final indicator of the long-maintained institutional Sinophobia in Argentina. While these more subtle forms of discrimination could already be observed before the outbreak of Covid-19, the global spread of the pandemic enhanced the tolerance of racist prejudices and attacks against ethnic Chinese within Argentinian society.

Within these structures, the Chinese community in Argentina gradually found various ways to make its own voice heard. To explain these dynamics, we turn towards theories of institutional change that serve as the heuristic framework for our further analysis.

Institutional Change

As shown by Djelic and Quack (2003, 2008), institutional change in both domestic and transnational spaces may be attributed to either 'trickle-up' or 'trickle-down' trajectories. On the one hand, trickle-down effects refer to national or transnational institutions being challenged by supranational or non-governmental organizations. As a result, transnationally negotiated agreements and guidelines are implemented top-down, though often without binding force. In this case, (sub-)national authorities are pressured to enforce rules directly at the national level, for example, by integrating them into national law. On the other hand, trickle-up effects occur more indirectly and bottom-up: individual subnational actors and groups may challenge the dominant models by informally introducing and acting according to new and innovative rules of the game. As a result, small changes may contribute to incremental bottom-up processes, ultimately leading to significant renewals.

Moreover, institutional change may be initiated through different mechanisms, enhancing either sudden or gradual transformations. Among these, the process of *displacement* in particular implies a 'slowly rising salience of subordinate relative to dominant institutions' through 'defection', often by adapting foreign practices (Streeck and Thelen 2005: 31; Quack and Djelic 2005).

Although these mechanisms primarily refer to economic and political contexts, their implications may be directly translated into general institutional changes, including those of racist discourses. As stated above, the dominant *rules* within the national context of Argentina consist in the often subtle forms of discrimination and exclusion of ethnic Chinese due to numerous prejudices that have become aggravated in the context of Covid-19. Although the stigmatization of Chinese people as scapegoats for the crisis has become a global phenomenon, so far Argentinian[7] and transnational authorities have barely raised their voices against the related sinophobic attacks. Consequently, the discriminated minority of Chinese immigrants in Argentina could neither hope for trickle-down effects improving their social standing from a transnational perspective, nor for direct top-down initiatives within their host country. Instead, they were required to seek their own channels of empowerment from the bottom up. Finally, we argue that a decisive indicator of their successful bottom-up dynamics was their increasing organization: incipient movements 'are characterised by informal, diffuse and hidden types of *organization* or "networks in the everyday"' (Waters 2003: 72, italics added).

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[7] With the exception of INADI (2020), which engaged in publishing relevant documents.

The goal of the following empirical sections is to trace how Chinese immigrants in Argentina organized themselves to challenge institutionalized racist structures from the bottom up. Generally, we look at this process as a gradually established movement aimed at introducing institutional change through displacement, that is, collecting arguments and raising their own voices as a formerly subordinate minority against the dominant sinophobic discourses.

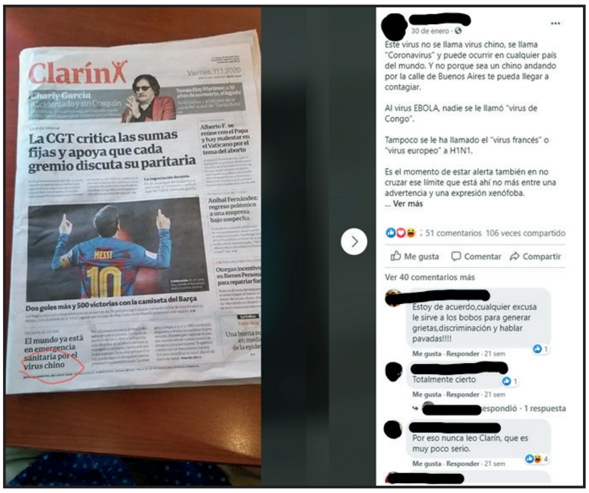
New Answers to Old Questions

Below, we identify three different phases of digital anti-Sinophobia based on internal developments, external influences and their combination in enhancing an increasingly organized movement in Argentina. While all three phases rapidly evolved after the initial outbreak of Covid-19 and partially overlapped with each other, below they are idealized for the purpose of clarity. Thus, in contrast to Beach and Pedersen (2013), we do not presume strict causality but acknowledge the inherently unstructured nature of human action and reaction.

First Phase: Internal Influences

I. Identification of Increasingly Sinophobic Media Discourses

The first steps towards an organized movement were enhanced by collective statements against media narratives.[8] In January 2020, the Argentine newspaper *Clarín* took up the global narrative of the 'Chinese virus' and introduced it to the country: 'The world is already in a health emergency because of the Chinese virus' (Clarín 2020a). By then, the Chinese community already began to identify the increasing danger of media narratives on Covid-19 to reinforce racist prejudices: the direct link made between the virus and their ethnicity allowed the stigmatization of Chinese immigrants not only as scapegoats for the crisis, but also as dangerous to public health. Thus, claiming that previous diseases had not been identified by their country of origin, the Chinese community in Argentina asked media institutions to stop referring to Covid-19 as the 'Chinese virus' (1)[9] and avoid potential stigma.


Clarín
Viernes 31.1.2020
Charly García
Accidentado y sin Cosquín
La CGT critica las sumas fijas y apoya que cada gremio discuta su paritaria
Alberto F. se reúne con el Papa y hay malestar en el Vaticano por el tema del aborto
Aníbal Fernández: regreso polémico a una empresa bajo sospecha
MESSI
10
Dos goles más y 500 victorias con la camiseta del Barça
El mundo ya está en emergencia sanitaria por el virus chino
Me gusta
Comentar
Compartir

[redacted]
30 de enero ·

Este virus no se llama virus chino, se llama "Coronavirus" y puede ocurrir en cualquier país del mundo. Y no porque sea un chino andando por la calle de Buenos Aires te pueda llegar a contagiar.

Al virus EBOLA, nadie se le llamó "virus de Congo".

Tampoco se le ha llamado el "virus francés" o "virus europeo" a H1N1.

Es el momento de estar alerta también en no cruzar ese límite que está ahí no más entre una advertencia y una expresión xenófoba.
... Ver más

51 comentarios 106 veces compartido

Ver 40 comentarios más

[redacted]
Estoy de acuerdo,cualquier excusa le sirve a los bobos para generar grietas,discriminación y hablar pavadas!!!! 1
Me gusta · Responder · 21 sem

[redacted]
Totalmente cierto 1
Me gusta · Responder · 21 sem
[redacted] respondió · 1 respuesta

[redacted]
Por eso nunca leo Clarín, que es muy poco serio. 4
Me gusta · Responder · 21 sem

[redacted]

Figure 1

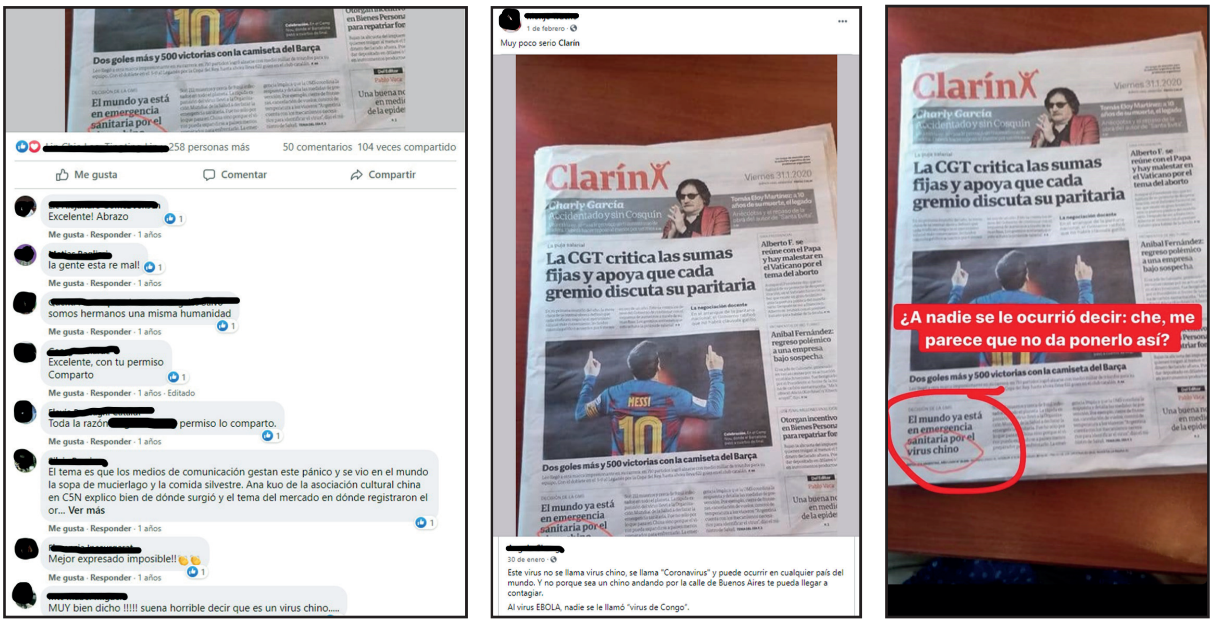
As underlined by different statements by both Chinese migrants and Argentinian citizens, this perception of news media as a main source of potentially reinforced racism spread quickly. Among others, an Argentine friend of a Chinese immigrant[10] directly stated her concern at the public media causing a panic by spreading images of 'bat soup' and wild animals in Chinese food markets (2). Simultaneously, she emphasized the importance of understanding cultural sources,

---

[8] As the sources used by our interlocutors have mainly been taken from Argentina's biggest newspapers, *Clarín* and *La Nación*, we follow their example by including them in this paper. *Clarín* belongs to Argentina's largest and most influential telecommunications company, Grupo Clarín, and leads sales with 206,000 copies daily. It is followed by the 103,000 copies of *La Nación*. Both have a politically right-wing orientation (Molina 2019).

[9] The related screenshots can be identified by their number listed within parentheses.

[10] All names and personal information of research participants have been omitted or replaced by pseudonyms. Exceptions are those who have explicitly given us their permission to use their personal data for publication.



Dos goles más y 500 victorias con la camiseta del Barça
El mundo ya está en emergencia sanitaria por el
Una buena no en medio de la epide
Clarín
La CGT critica las sumas fijas y apoya que cada gremio discuta su paritaria
Alberto F. se reúne con el Papa y hay malestar en el Vaticano por el tema del aborto
Aníbal Fernández: regreso polémico a una empresa bajo sospecha
Otorgan incentivo en Bienes Personales para repatriar fondos
Charly García Accidentado y sin Cosquín
El mundo ya está en emergencia sanitaria por el virus chino
Me gusta
Comentar
Compartir
Me gusta · Responder

[redacted] 258 personas más 50 comentarios 104 veces compartido

[redacted]
Excelente! Abrazo
Me gusta · Responder · 1 años

[redacted]
la gente esta re mal!
Me gusta · Responder · 1 años

[redacted]
somos hermanos una misma humanidad
Me gusta · Responder · 1 años

[redacted]
Excelente, con tu permiso
Comparto
Me gusta · Responder · 1 años · Editado

[redacted]
Toda la razón [redacted] permiso lo comparto.
Me gusta · Responder · 1 años

[redacted]
El tema es que los medios de comunicación gestan este pánico y se vio en el mundo la sopa de mucierlago y la comida silvestre. Ana kuo de la asociación cultural china en C5N explico bien de dónde surgió y el tema del mercado en dónde registraron el or... Ver más
Me gusta · Responder · 1 años

[redacted]
Mejor expresado imposible!! 👏👏
Me gusta · Responder · 1 años

[redacted]
MUY bien dicho !!!!! suena horrible decir que es un virus chino.....

[redacted]
1 de febrero
Muy poco serio Clarín

[redacted]
30 de enero
Este virus no se llama virus chino, se llama "Coronavirus" y puede ocurrir en cualquier país del mundo. Y no porque sea un chino andando por la calle de Buenos Aires te pueda llegar a contagiar.

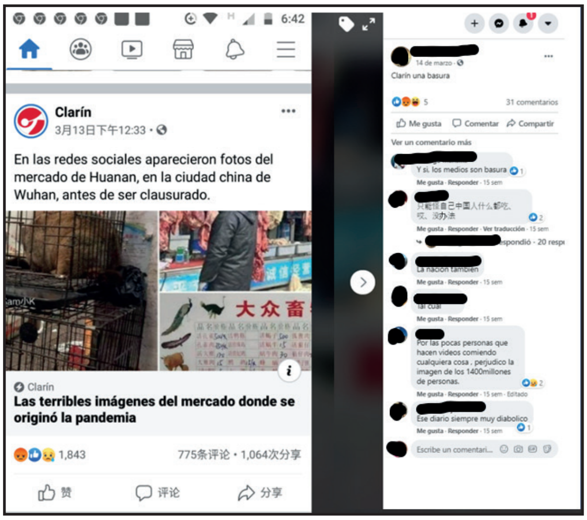
Al virus EBOLA, nadie se le llamó "virus de Congo".

¿A nadie se le ocurrió decir: che, me parece que no da ponerlo así?

Figures 2-4

instead of spreading prejudices without further reflection. Other Chinese migrants stated that *Clarín* was 'not to be taken seriously' (3)[11] and criticized the lack of public solidarity with them as victims, wondering how 'nobody thought "Hey, I think it's not okay to write in this way" ' (4).

This monitoring of headlines and media content by numerous interlocutors on both Facebook and Instagram continued throughout the pandemic and increased with the first confirmed Argentinian case of Covid-19 in early March 2020. The first infected patient was reported by *Clarín*, which once more used the racialized term the 'Chinese virus' as having arrived in Argentina (Clarín 2020b). Simultaneously, *Clarín* (Clarín 2020c) publicly denounced the seemingly bad hygienic standards of Chinese food markets. Again, Chinese immigrants reacted by increasingly pointing out their concern at public media severely shaping sinophobic discrimination, denouncing Argentinian news media as 'garbage' and 'always very diabolical'. Simultaneously, the number of Argentinian supporters of Chinese people fighting racism increased significantly (e.g., 5).



6:42
大众畜
赞
评论
分享
Me gusta
Comentar
Compartir

Clarín
3月13日下午12:33

En las redes sociales aparecieron fotos del mercado de Huanan, en la ciudad china de Wuhan, antes de ser clausurado.

Clarín
Las terribles imágenes del mercado donde se originó la pandemia

1,843 775条评论 · 1,064次分享

[redacted]
14 de marzo
Clarín una basura

5 31 comentarios

Ver un comentario más

[redacted]
Y si, los medios son basura
Me gusta · Responder · 15 sem

[redacted]
只能怪自己中国人什么都吃、哎、没办法
Me gusta · Responder · Ver traducción · 15 sem

[redacted] respondió · 20 respu

[redacted]
La nacion tambien
Me gusta · Responder · 15 sem

[redacted]
Tal cual
Me gusta · Responder · 15 sem

[redacted]
Por las pocas personas que hacen videos comiendo cualquiera cosa , perjudico la imagen de los 1400millones de personas.
Me gusta · Responder · 15 sem · Editado

[redacted]
Ese diario siempre muy diabolico
Me gusta · Responder · 15 sem

Escribe un comentari...

Figure 5

Partially, these collective actions led to media counterstatements to falsified publications. Among others, an announcement by *La Nación* (La Nación 2020), claiming that traders in China had returned to selling bat meat again, had caused further large waves of protests, including practices of 'naming and shaming' (e.g., 6a, 6b, 7) and claims that such markets only existed in 'Southern parts of Asia'' outside China (6c). Consequently, three days after the initial publication, *La Nación* (Willie 2020) published a second article highlighting the need to differentiate among different nations within Asia and their heterogeneous cultures and habits. As a result, several

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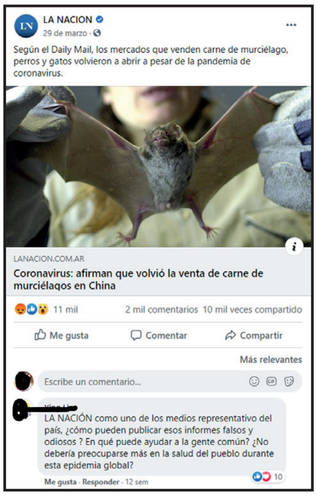
[11] With the exception of transnational influences as elaborated below, all cited comments were originally published in Spanish.



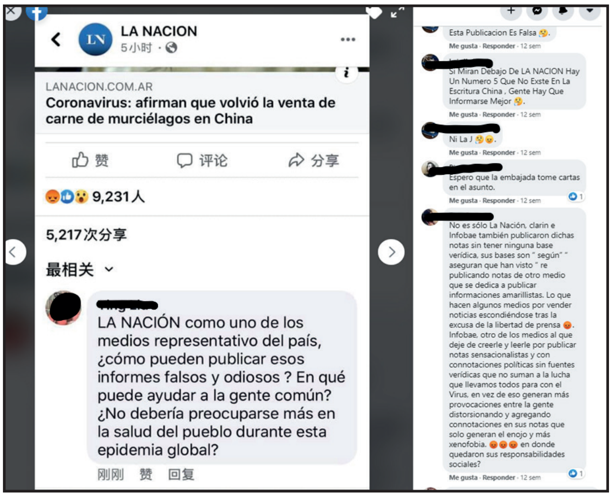
LA NACION
29 de marzo ·

Según el Daily Mail, los mercados que venden carne de murciélago, perros y gatos volvieron a abrir a pesar de la pandemia de coronavirus.

LANACION.COM.AR
Coronavirus: afirman que volvió la venta de carne de murciélagos en China

11 mil · 2 mil comentarios · 10 mil veces compartido

[redacted]
LA NACIÓN como uno de los medios representativo del país, ¿cómo pueden publicar esos informes falsos y odiosos ? En qué puede ayudar a la gente común? ¿No debería preocuparse más en la salud del pueblo durante esta epidemia global?
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 10



LA NACION
5小时 ·

LANACION.COM.AR
Coronavirus: afirman que volvió la venta de carne de murciélagos en China

9,231人

5,217次分享

最相关

[redacted]
LA NACIÓN como uno de los medios representativo del país, ¿cómo pueden publicar esos informes falsos y odiosos ? En qué puede ayudar a la gente común? ¿No debería preocuparse más en la salud del pueblo durante esta epidemia global?
刚刚 赞 回复

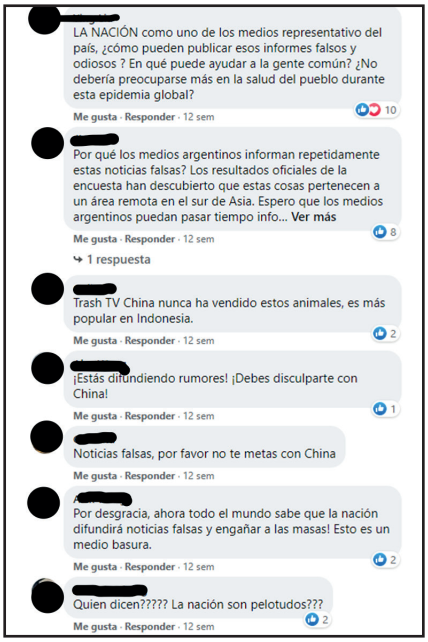
Esta Publicacion Es Falsa 😥.
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
Si Miran Debajo De LA NACION Hay Un Numero 5 Que No Exste En La Escritura China , Gente Hay Que Informarse Mejor 😥.
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
Ni La J 😥😠.
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
Espero que la embajada tome cartas en el asunto.
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 1

[redacted]
No es sólo La Nación, clarin e Infobae también publicaron dichas notas sin tener ninguna base verídica, sus bases son " según" " aseguran que han visto " re publicando notas de otro medio que se dedica a publicar informaciones amarillistas. Lo que hacen algunos medios por vender noticias escondiéndose tras la excusa de la libertad de prensa 😡. Infobae, otro de los medios al que deje de creerle y leerle por publicar notas sensacionalistas y con connotaciones políticas sin fuentes verídicas que no suman a la lucha que llevamos todos para con el Virus, en vez de eso generan más provocaciones entre la gente distorsionando y agregando connotaciones en sus notas que solo generan el enojo y más xenofobia. 😡😡😡 en donde quedaron sus responsabilidades sociales?
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 1



[redacted]
LA NACIÓN como uno de los medios representativo del país, ¿cómo pueden publicar esos informes falsos y odiosos ? En qué puede ayudar a la gente común? ¿No debería preocuparse más en la salud del pueblo durante esta epidemia global?
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 10

[redacted]
Por qué los medios argentinos informan repetidamente estas noticias falsas? Los resultados oficiales de la encuesta han descubierto que estas cosas pertenecen a un área remota en el sur de Asia. Espero que los medios argentinos puedan pasar tiempo info... **Ver más**
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 8
↳ 1 respuesta

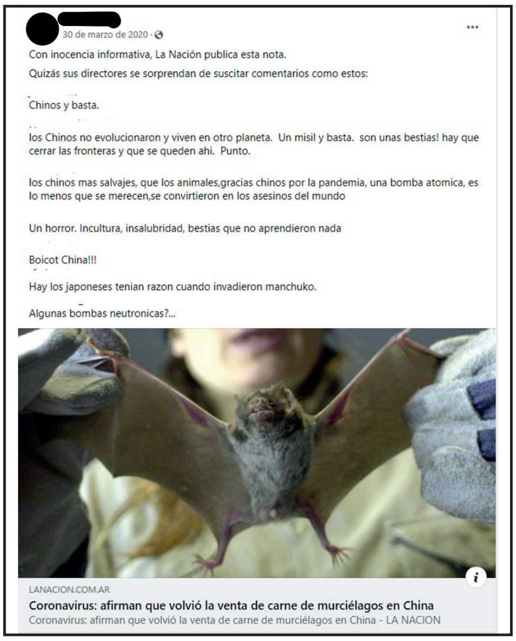
[redacted]
Trash TV China nunca ha vendido estos animales, es más popular en Indonesia.
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 2

[redacted]
¡Estás difundiendo rumores! ¡Debes disculparte con China!
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 1

[redacted]
Noticias falsas, por favor no te metas con China
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
Por desgracia, ahora todo el mundo sabe que la nación difundirá noticias falsas y engañar a las masas! Esto es un medio basura.
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 2

[redacted]
Quien dicen????? La nación son pelotudos???
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · 2



[redacted]
30 de marzo de 2020 ·

Con inocencia informativa, La Nación publica esta nota.

Quizás sus directores se sorprendan de suscitar comentarios como estos:

Chinos y basta.

los Chinos no evolucionaron y viven en otro planeta. Un misil y basta. son unas bestias! hay que cerrar las fronteras y que se queden ahi. Punto.

los chinos mas salvajes, que los animales,gracias chinos por la pandemia, una bomba atomica, es lo menos que se merecen,se convirtieron en los asesinos del mundo

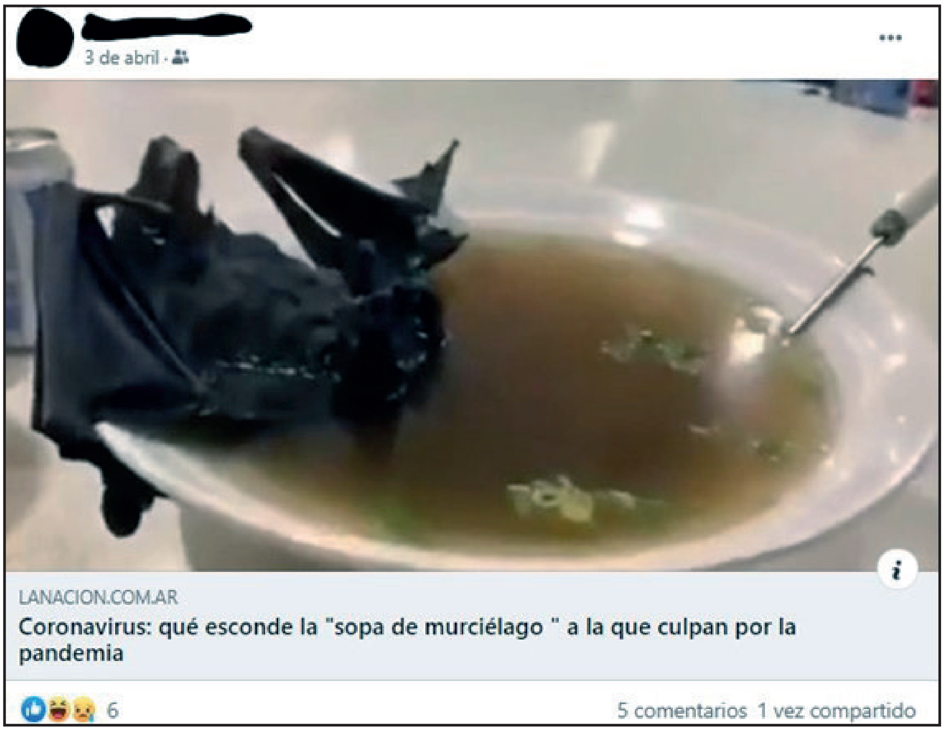
Un horror. Incultura, insalubridad, bestias que no aprendieron nada

Boicot China!!!

Hay los japoneses tenian razon cuando invadieron manchuko.

Algunas bombas neutronicas?...

LANACION.COM.AR
Coronavirus: afirman que volvió la venta de carne de murciélagos en China
Coronavirus: afirman que volvió la venta de carne de murciélagos en China - LA NACION



[redacted]
3 de abril ·

LANACION.COM.AR
Coronavirus: qué esconde la "sopa de murciélago " a la que culpan por la pandemia

6 · 5 comentarios 1 vez compartido

Figures 6a-c, 7- 8

prejudices against Chinese people that *La Nación* itself had reinforced through its first article were dispelled. Again, Chinese residents in Argentina repeatedly shared this counterstatement on social media (e.g., 8).

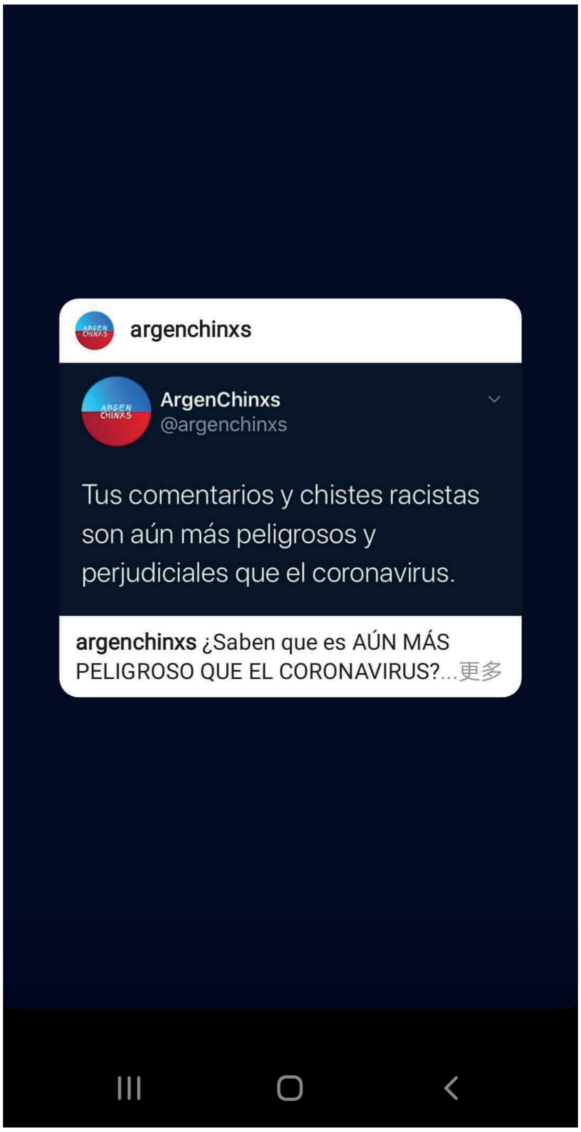
These dynamics revealed the capacity of the formerly unheard Chinese minority to find their own voices and initiate broader changes from the bottom up, encouraged by the racism that had been aggravated throughout the pandemic. However, as the pandemic went on, the scapegoating of Chinese immigrants for its outbreak did not remain a mere media narrative but increased the direct discrimination they faced.

II. Identification of an Increasingly Directly Expressed Sinophobia

Despite their initial efforts to avoid their stigmatization, Chinese and Asian immigrants experienced a rapid increase in racist discrimination by the Argentinian host population. Thus, in a second step, they publicly discussed their personal experiences while accusing media narratives of having directly enhanced these consequences.

1. *Identification of subtle racist expressions*. In a first step, general and more subtle expressions of racism were uncovered. In this context, one of the main ideas promoted by migrants on social media was that a joke could also express discrimination. Moreover, numerous Instagram users published calls to stop sharing offensive memes and to pay attention to the racist content of jokes (9: 'Your racist comments and jokes are more dangerous than Covid-19').

2. *Identification of concrete experiences with harassment and exclusion*. Beyond jokes, the experience of a second-generation Chinese immigrant called Anna best exemplifies both the enhanced Sinophobia and the increasingly organized counterreactions in Argentina (Tronfi 2020). At school, her Argentine classmates identified her as a particularly dangerous transmitter of the virus and started to exclude her and harass her (ibid.). This incident immediately caused heated debates on social media. Among others, numerous Chinese immigrants claimed that 'all of this was the fault of the media who named the virus the Chinese virus' (10). Subsequently, they continued to publish, reflect and comment on and share their personal experiences of racist attacks on digital platforms. Therefore, building on the first phase of raising awareness to the danger of media narratives enhancing racism, the formerly silent Chinese migrants in Argentina gradually made their own voice heard (11, 12, 13, 14).



argenchinxs

ArgenChinxs
@argenchinxs

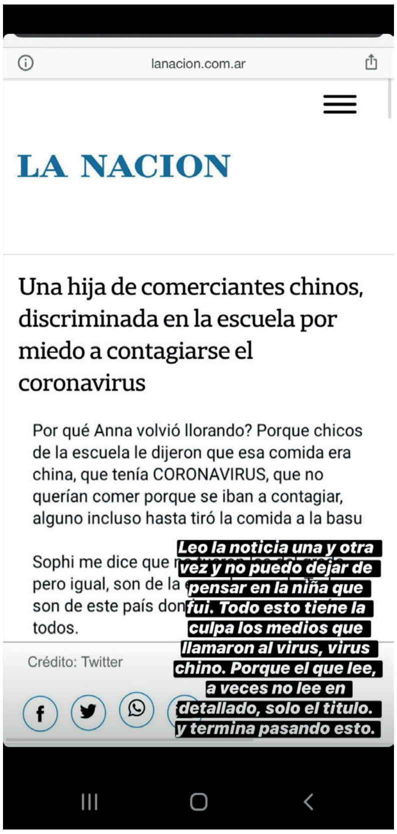
Tus comentarios y chistes racistas son aún más peligrosos y perjudiciales que el coronavirus.

argenchinxs ¿Saben que es AÚN MÁS PELIGROSO QUE EL CORONAVIRUS?...更多

Figure 9

Second phase: External Influences

The first initiatives towards an anti-sinophobic movement in Argentina did not derive only from domestic developments and enhanced discrimination but were, in a second phase, also inspired by multi-layered external and transnational influences.



lanacion.com.ar

LA NACION

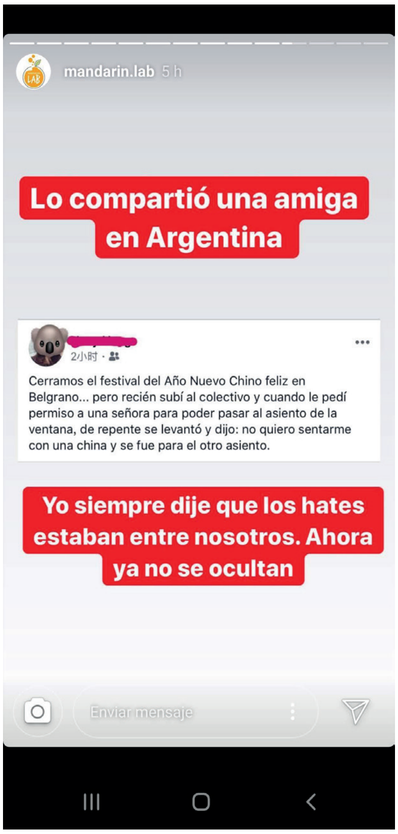
Una hija de comerciantes chinos, discriminada en la escuela por miedo a contagiarse el coronavirus

Por qué Anna volvió llorando? Porque chicos de la escuela le dijeron que esa comida era china, que tenía CORONAVIRUS, que no querían comer porque se iban a contagiar, alguno incluso hasta tiró la comida a la basu

Sophi me dice que
pero igual, son de la
son de este país don
todos.

Crédito: Twitter

Leo la noticia una y otra vez y no puedo dejar de pensar en la niña que fui. Todo esto tiene la culpa los medios que llamaron al virus, virus chino. Porque el que lee, a veces no lee en detallado, solo el titulo. y termina pasando esto.



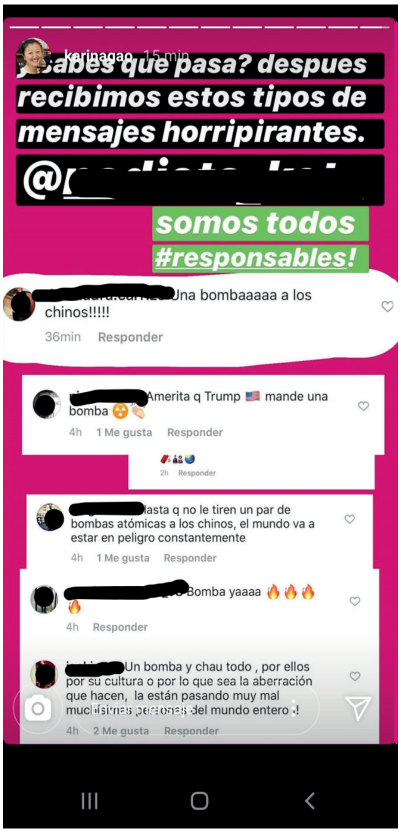
mandarin.lab 5 h

Lo compartió una amiga en Argentina

[redacted]
2小时 ·

Cerramos el festival del Año Nuevo Chino feliz en Belgrano... pero recién subí al colectivo y cuando le pedí permiso a una señora para poder pasar al asiento de la ventana, de repente se levantó y dijo: no quiero sentarme con una china y se fue para el otro asiento.

Yo siempre dije que los hates estaban entre nosotros. Ahora ya no se ocultan



karinagao 15 min

¿sabes que pasa? despues recibimos estos tipos de mensajes horripirantes. @[redacted]

somos todos #responsables!

[redacted] Una bombaaaaa a los chinos!!!!!
36min Responder

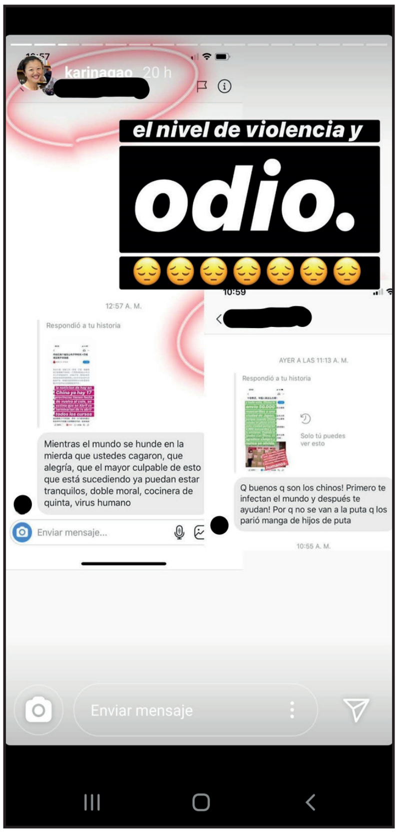
[redacted] Amerita q Trump 🇺🇸 mande una bomba ☢️👏
4h 1 Me gusta Responder

🧨👨‍👩‍👧🌏
2h Responder

[redacted] Hasta q no le tiren un par de bombas atómicas a los chinos, el mundo va a estar en peligro constantemente
4h 1 Me gusta Responder

[redacted] Bomba yaaaa 🔥🔥🔥🔥
4h Responder

[redacted] Un bomba y chau todo , por ellos por su cultura o por lo que sea la aberración que hacen, la están pasando muy mal muchísimas personas del mundo entero !
4h 2 Me gusta Responder



karinagao 20 h

[redacted]

el nivel de violencia y odio. 😔😔😔😔😔😔😔

12:57 A. M.

Respondió a tu historia

Mientras el mundo se hunde en la mierda que ustedes cagaron, que alegría, que el mayor culpable de esto que está sucediendo ya puedan estar tranquilos, doble moral, cocinera de quinta, virus humano

10:59

[redacted]

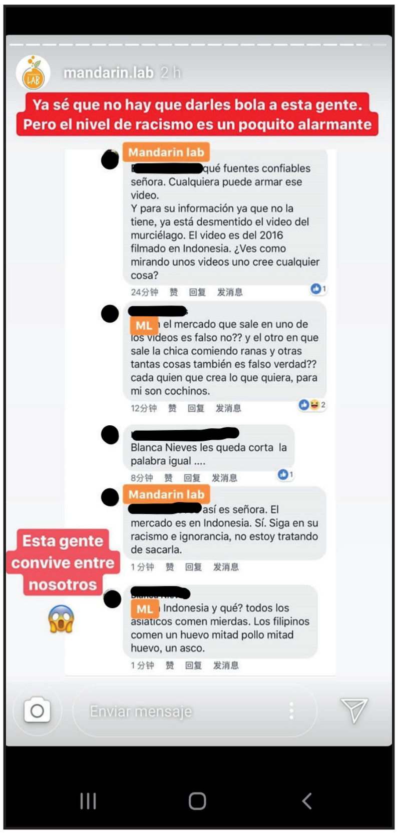
AYER A LAS 11:13 A. M.

Respondió a tu historia

Solo tú puedes ver esto

Q buenos q son los chinos! Primero te infectan el mundo y después te ayudan! Por q no se van a la puta q los parió manga de hijos de puta

10:55 A. M.



mandarin.lab 2 h

Ya sé que no hay que darles bola a esta gente. Pero el nivel de racismo es un poquito alarmante

Mandarin lab
[redacted] qué fuentes confiables señora. Cualquiera puede armar ese video.
Y para su información ya que no la tiene, ya está desmentido el video del murciélago. El video es del 2016 filmado en Indonesia. ¿Ves como mirando unos videos uno cree cualquier cosa?
24分钟 赞 回复 发消息 1

[redacted]
ML el mercado que sale en uno de los videos es falso no?? y el otro en que sale la chica comiendo ranas y otras tantas cosas también es falso verdad?? cada quien que crea lo que quiera, para mi son cochinos.
12分钟 赞 回复 发消息 2

[redacted]
Blanca Nieves les queda corta la palabra igual ....
8分钟 赞 回复 发消息 1

Mandarin lab
[redacted] así es señora. El mercado es en Indonesia. Sí. Siga en su racismo e ignorancia, no estoy tratando de sacarla.
1分钟 赞 回复 发消息

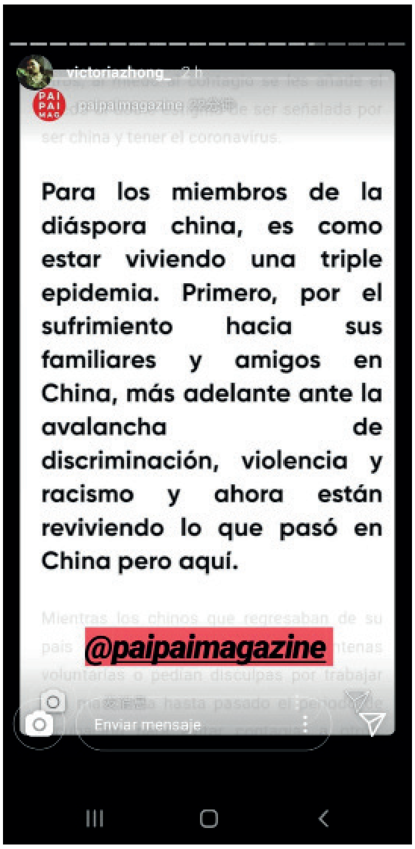
[redacted]
ML Indonesia y qué? todos los asiaticos comen mierdas. Los filipinos comen un huevo mitad pollo mitad huevo, un asco.
1分钟 赞 回复 发消息

Esta gente convive entre nosotros 😱

Figures 10-14

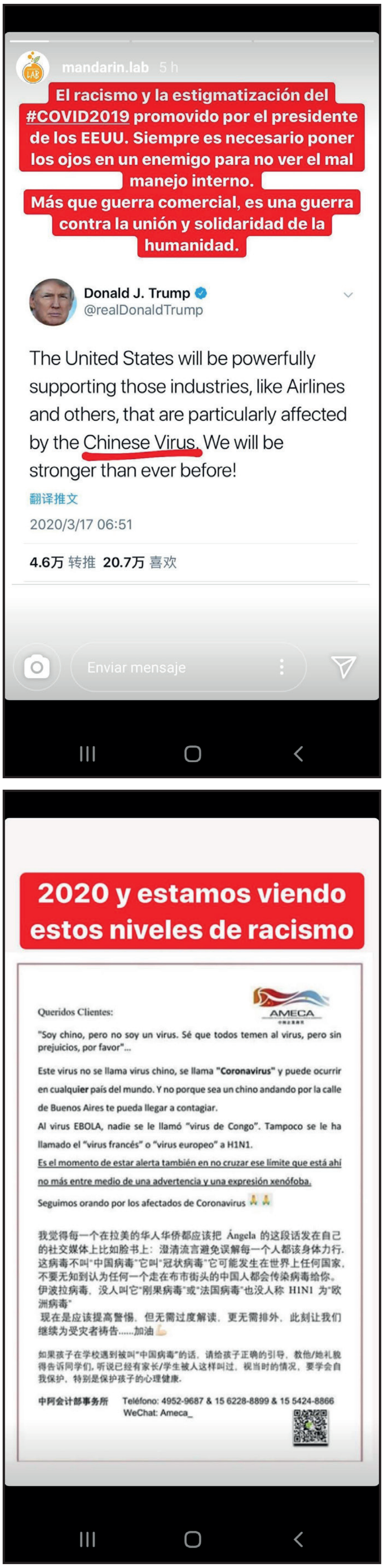
1. *Globally increasing Sinophobia and countermovements*. In a first step, individual Chinese immigrants found and shared publications addressing and criticizing Sinophobia in third states, thereby encouraging their own communities to respond in a similar way. At first, a Spanish magazine had identified 'an avalanche of discrimination, violence and racism' being experienced by members of the Chinese diaspora (15). This statement was discovered and distributed by a descendant of Chinese migrants to Argentina: by sharing it on social media, he drew attention to the global dynamics of anti-Chinese racism. This adoption of foreign statements in Argentina exemplifies not only the rapid spread of sinophobic narratives around the globe, but also the strong transnational connections of Chinese migrant communities and their ability to adapt domestically to globally enhanced initiatives.

Secondly, global political discourses were increasingly contested. In particular, the prominent use of the term the 'Chinese virus' and its negative connotations by Donald Trump, then



Para los miembros de la diáspora china, es como estar viviendo una triple epidemia. Primero, por el sufrimiento hacia sus familiares y amigos en China, más adelante ante la avalancha de discriminación, violencia y racismo y ahora están reviviendo lo que pasó en China pero aquí.

Figure 15



El racismo y la estigmatización del #COVID2019 promovido por el presidente de los EEUU. Siempre es necesario poner los ojos en un enemigo para no ver el mal manejo interno.
Más que guerra comercial, es una guerra contra la unión y solidaridad de la humanidad.

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries, like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the Chinese Virus. We will be stronger than ever before!

翻译推文

2020/3/17 06:51

4.6万 转推 20.7万 喜欢

2020 y estamos viendo estos niveles de racismo

Queridos Clientes:

"Soy chino, pero no soy un virus. Sé que todos temen al virus, pero sin prejuicios, por favor"...

Este virus no se llama virus chino, se llama **"Coronavirus"** y puede ocurrir en cualquier país del mundo. Y no porque sea un chino andando por la calle de Buenos Aires te pueda llegar a contagiar.

Al virus EBOLA, nadie se le llamó "virus de Congo". Tampoco se le ha llamado el "virus francés" o "virus europeo" a H1N1.

Es el momento de estar alerta también en no cruzar ese límite que está ahí no más entre medio de una advertencia y una expresión xenófoba.

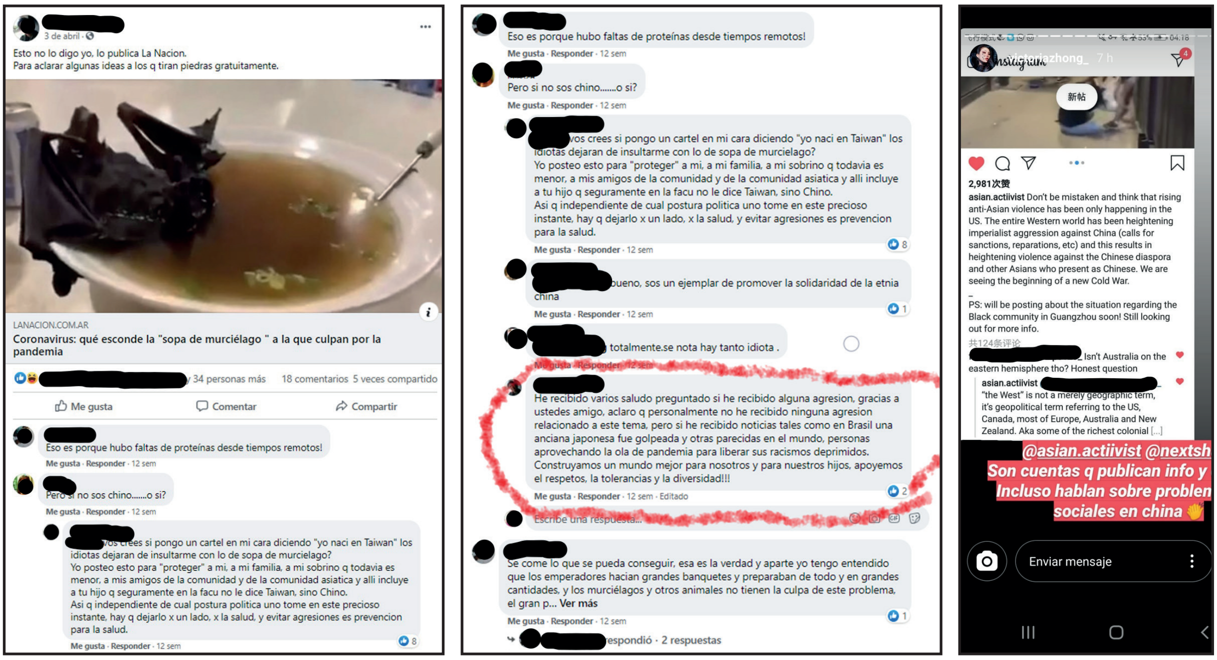
Seguimos orando por los afectados de Coronavirus 🙏🙏

我觉得每一个在拉美的华人华侨都应该把 Ángela 的这段话发在自己的社交媒体上比如脸书上：澄清流言避免误解每一个人都该身体力行．这病毒不叫"中国病毒"它叫"冠状病毒"它可能发生在世界上任何国家．不要无知到认为任何一个走在布市街头的中国人都会传染病毒给你。伊波拉病毒．没人叫它"刚果病毒"或"法国病毒"也没人称 H1N1 为"欧洲病毒"
现在是应该提高警惕．但无需过度解读．更无需排外．此刻让我们继续为受灾者祷告......加油💪

如果孩子在学校遇到被叫"中国病毒"的话．请给孩子正确的引导．教他/她礼貌得告诉同学们，听说已经有家长/学生被人这样叫过．视当时的情况．要学会自我保护．特别是保护孩子的心理健康．

中阿会计部事务所 Teléfono: 4952-9687 & 15 6228-8899 & 15 5424-8866
WeChat: Ameca_

Figures 16-17



[redacted]
3 de abril ·
Esto no lo digo yo, lo publica La Nacion.
Para aclarar algunas ideas a los q tiran piedras gratuitamente.

LANACION.COM.AR
Coronavirus: qué esconde la "sopa de murciélago " a la que culpan por la pandemia

[redacted] y 34 personas más 18 comentarios 5 veces compartido

[redacted]
Eso es porque hubo faltas de proteínas desde tiempos remotos!
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
Pero si no sos chino.......o si?
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
[redacted] vos crees si pongo un cartel en mi cara diciendo "yo naci en Taiwan" los idiotas dejaran de insultarme con lo de sopa de murcielago?
Yo posteo esto para "proteger" a mi, a mi familia, a mi sobrino q todavia es menor, a mis amigos de la comunidad y de la comunidad asiatica y alli incluye a tu hijo q seguramente en la facu no le dice Taiwan, sino Chino.
Asi q independiente de cual postura politica uno tome en este precioso instante, hay q dejarlo x un lado, x la salud, y evitar agresiones es prevencion para la salud.
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem 8

[redacted]
Eso es porque hubo faltas de proteínas desde tiempos remotos!
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
Pero si no sos chino.......o si?
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
[redacted] vos crees si pongo un cartel en mi cara diciendo "yo naci en Taiwan" los idiotas dejaran de insultarme con lo de sopa de murcielago?
Yo posteo esto para "proteger" a mi, a mi familia, a mi sobrino q todavia es menor, a mis amigos de la comunidad y de la comunidad asiatica y alli incluye a tu hijo q seguramente en la facu no le dice Taiwan, sino Chino.
Asi q independiente de cual postura politica uno tome en este precioso instante, hay q dejarlo x un lado, x la salud, y evitar agresiones es prevencion para la salud.
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem 8

[redacted]
[redacted] bueno, sos un ejemplar de promover la solidaridad de la etnia china
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem 1

[redacted]
[redacted] totalmente.se nota hay tanto idiota .
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem

[redacted]
He recibido varios saludo preguntado si he recibido alguna agresion, gracias a ustedes amigo, aclaro q personalmente no he recibido ninguna agresion relacionado a este tema, pero si he recibido noticias tales como en Brasil una anciana japonesa fue golpeada y otras parecidas en el mundo, personas aprovechando la ola de pandemia para liberar sus racismos deprimidos. Construyamos un mundo mejor para nosotros y para nuestros hijos, apoyemos el respetos, la tolerancias y la diversidad!!!
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem · Editado 2

[redacted]
Se come lo que se pueda conseguir, esa es la verdad y aparte yo tengo entendido que los emperadores hacian grandes banquetes y preparaban de todo y en grandes cantidades, y los murciélagos y otros animales no tienen la culpa de este problema, el gran p... **Ver más**
Me gusta · Responder · 12 sem 1

[redacted] respondió · 2 respuestas

2,981次赞
asian.actiivist Don't be mistaken and think that rising anti-Asian violence has been only happening in the US. The entire Western world has been heightening imperialist aggression against China (calls for sanctions, reparations, etc) and this results in heightening violence against the Chinese diaspora and other Asians who present as Chinese. We are seeing the beginning of a new Cold War.
–
PS: will be posting about the situation regarding the Black community in Guangzhou soon! Still looking out for more info.
共124条评论
[redacted] Isn't Australia on the eastern hemisphere tho? Honest question
asian.actiivist [redacted] "the West" is not a merely geographic term, it's geopolitical term referring to the US, Canada, most of Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Aka some of the richest colonial [...]

@asian.actiivist @nextsh
Son cuentas q publican info y
Incluso hablan sobre problen
sociales en china 👏

Figures 18-20

President of the United States, was sharply criticized: his public twitter post claiming that the 'Chinese virus' was harming numerous US industries (17.03.2020) caused waves of counterstatements from Argentinian Instagram users (16). Additionally, one of the first public communications by official migrant associations in Argentina proclaimed the global slogan 'I am not a virus' (17).

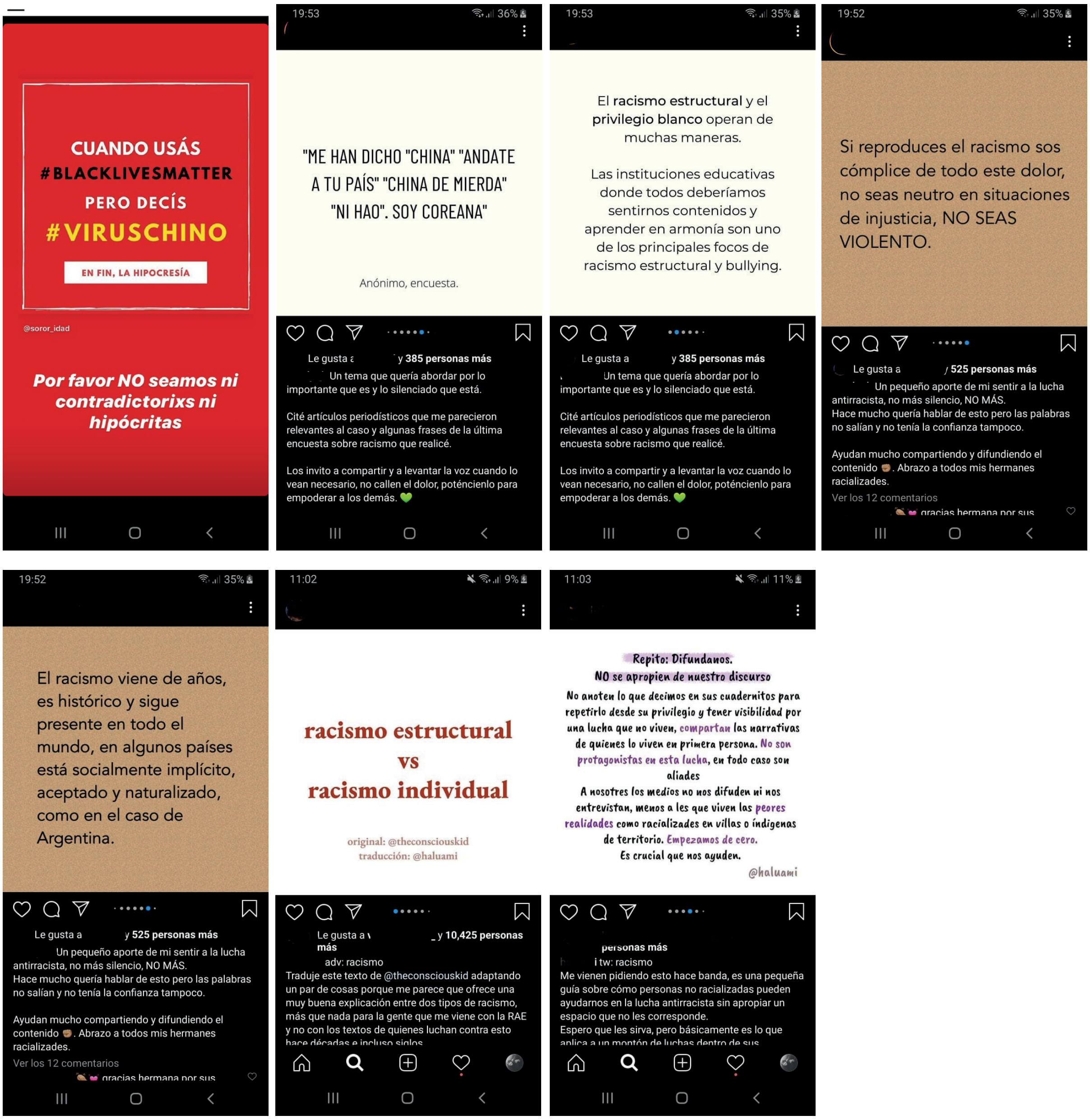
2. *Globally increasing Asiophobia*[12] *and countermovements*. As a second step, migrant communities within and beyond Argentina observed the emergence of a more general *Asiophobia* after Covid-19. First, a Taiwanese artist (03.04.2020) clarified how ethnic Asians in Brazil had been physically attacked by xenophobic host-country citizens, underlining how people were using the pandemic to 'liberate their suppressed racist feelings' (18, 19). These insights were re-emphasized by a Sino-Argentinian Instagram user sharing background information from a Sino-Cuban activist: according to her, racist discrimination against ethnic Asians had increased globally, resulting from 'rising violence against the Chinese diaspora and other Asians mistaken for Chinese' (20).

3. *Incorporation of further global and domestic anti-racist movements*. As a third step, on the one hand, similarities with other global movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM 2021) in the US were identified and used as tools to leverage their own movement. Among these, numerous Chinese immigrants in Argentina pointed out the 'contradictions' and 'hypocrisy' of those supporting these movements while also promoting the use of the term 'Chinese virus' (21). Domestically, on the other hand, Chinese immigrants started to participate in third-party anti-racist movements initiated by other minorities who were being discriminated against in Argentina. For example, several descendants of Chinese immigrants in Buenos Aires discovered and cited the publications of a second-generation Bolivian immigrant who self-identified as '*marrón*' (brown),[13] while using and explaining specific categories such as racism and xenophobia. Further influences derived from a young indig-

---

[12] We thank Diana Yeh for her insightful remark on anti-Asian racism at our workshop.

[13] 'Brown Identity is an organization dedicated to problematizing structural, institutional and interpersonal racism; it is a political, legal, artistic and cultural approach from the Global South [...] to promote a fighting tool to vindicate the skins and faces of the children and grandchildren of indigenous people, peasants, internal and international migrants' (Manchester Digital Exhibitions, n.d.).



CUANDO USÁS #BLACKLIVESMATTER PERO DECÍS #VIRUSCHINO

EN FIN, LA HIPOCRESÍA

@soror_idad

Por favor NO seamos ni contradictorixs ni hipócritas

"ME HAN DICHO "CHINA" "ANDATE A TU PAÍS" "CHINA DE MIERDA" "NI HAO". SOY COREANA"

Anónimo, encuesta.

Le gusta a [redacted] y 385 personas más

[redacted] Un tema que quería abordar por lo importante que es y lo silenciado que está.

Cité artículos periodísticos que me parecieron relevantes al caso y algunas frases de la última encuesta sobre racismo que realicé.

Los invito a compartir y a levantar la voz cuando lo vean necesario, no callen el dolor, poténcienlo para empoderar a los demás. 💚

El **racismo estructural** y el **privilegio blanco** operan de muchas maneras.

Las instituciones educativas donde todos deberíamos sentirnos contenidos y aprender en armonía son uno de los principales focos de racismo estructural y bullying.

Le gusta a [redacted] y 385 personas más

[redacted] Un tema que quería abordar por lo importante que es y lo silenciado que está.

Cité artículos periodísticos que me parecieron relevantes al caso y algunas frases de la última encuesta sobre racismo que realicé.

Los invito a compartir y a levantar la voz cuando lo vean necesario, no callen el dolor, poténcienlo para empoderar a los demás. 💚

Si reproduces el racismo sos cómplice de todo este dolor, no seas neutro en situaciones de injusticia, NO SEAS VIOLENTO.

Le gusta a [redacted] y 525 personas más

[redacted] Un pequeño aporte de mi sentir a la lucha antirracista, no más silencio, NO MÁS.
Hace mucho quería hablar de esto pero las palabras no salían y no tenía la confianza tampoco.

Ayudan mucho compartiendo y difundiendo el contenido ✊. Abrazo a todos mis hermanes racializades.

Ver los 12 comentarios

[redacted] 👏💓 gracias hermana por sus

El racismo viene de años, es histórico y sigue presente en todo el mundo, en algunos países está socialmente implícito, aceptado y naturalizado, como en el caso de Argentina.

Le gusta a [redacted] y 525 personas más

[redacted] Un pequeño aporte de mi sentir a la lucha antirracista, no más silencio, NO MÁS.
Hace mucho quería hablar de esto pero las palabras no salían y no tenía la confianza tampoco.

Ayudan mucho compartiendo y difundiendo el contenido ✊. Abrazo a todos mis hermanes racializades.

Ver los 12 comentarios

[redacted] 👏💓 gracias hermana por sus

racismo estructural
vs
racismo individual

original: @theconsciouskid
traducción: @haluami

Le gusta a [redacted] y 10,425 personas más

[redacted] adv: racismo
Traduje este texto de @theconsciouskid adaptando un par de cosas porque me parece que ofrece una muy buena explicación entre dos tipos de racismo, más que nada para la gente que me viene con la RAE y no con los textos de quienes luchan contra esto hace décadas e incluso siglos

Repito: Difundanos.
NO se apropien de nuestro discurso
No anoten lo que decimos en sus cuadernitos para repetirlo desde su privilegio y tener visibilidad por una lucha que no viven, compartan las narrativas de quienes lo viven en primera persona. No son protagonistas en esta lucha, en todo caso son aliades
A nosotres los medios no nos difuden ni nos entrevistan, menos a les que viven las peores realidades como racializades en villas o índigenas de territorio. Empezamos de cero.
Es crucial que nos ayuden.
@haluami

[redacted] personas más

[redacted] tw: racismo
Me vienen pidiendo esto hace banda, es una pequeña guía sobre cómo personas no racializadas pueden ayudarnos en la lucha antirracista sin apropiar un espacio que no les corresponde.
Espero que les sirva, pero básicamente es lo que aplica a un montón de luchas dentro de sus

Figures 21, 22a-f

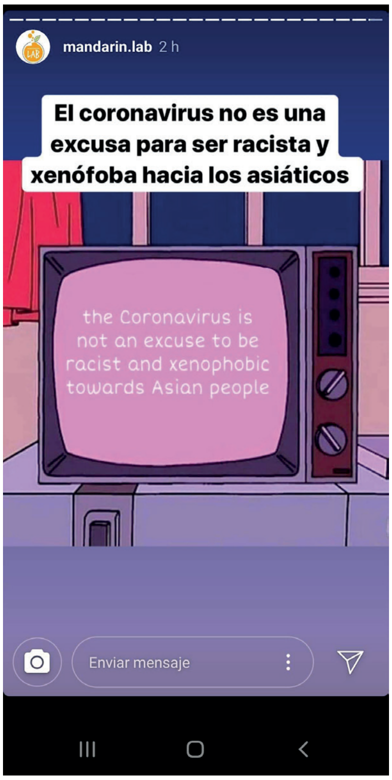
enous woman who self-identified as ‘indigenous, *chanka*, neurodivergent’ and part of a racialized group (22).

These three transnational sources of concepts, categories and analyses strongly influenced Chinese and Asian migrants in Argentina throughout the pandemic. To clarify the harassment Asian people experienced since the first media publications related to Covid-19, they too started to label their experiences xenophobia and racism. In this context, one originally English publication in particular, stating that ‘the Coronavirus [was] not an excuse to be racist and xenophobic towards Asian people’, won increasing popularity in Argentina (23).

Third Phase: Towards an Increasingly Organized Movement

In sum, the first two phases provided a toolbox for defeating racist discrimination as a formerly silent minority. As now portrayed, in a third phase, these dynamics culminated in one increasingly active countermovement to institutionalized racism.

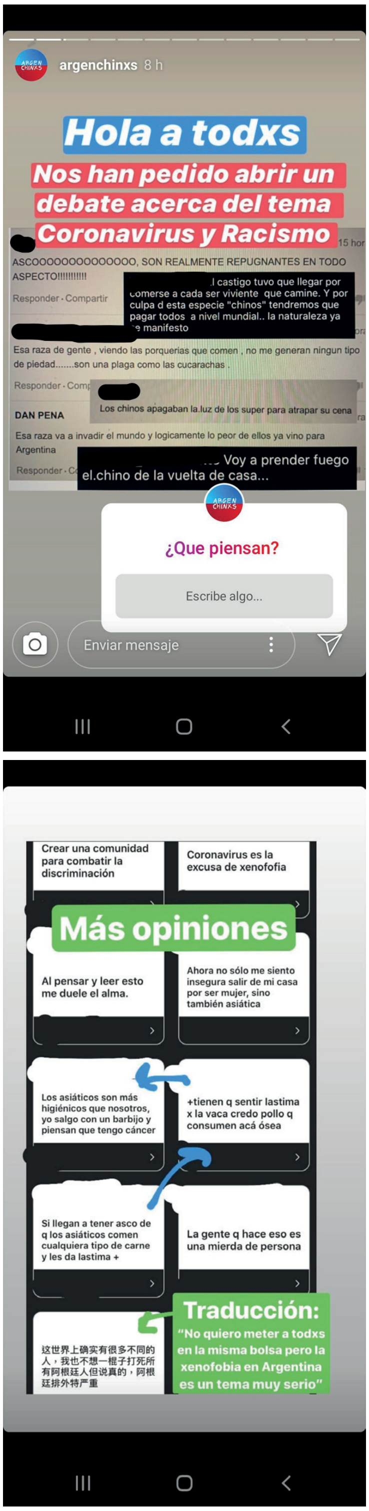
1. *Creation of new spaces for debate*. Identification of the growing racism propagated by sev-


mandarin.lab 2 h

El coronavirus no es una excusa para ser racista y xenófoba hacia los asiáticos

the Coronavirus is not an excuse to be racist and xenophobic towards Asian people

Figure 23


argenchinxs 8 h

Hola a todxs

Nos han pedido abrir un debate acerca del tema Coronavirus y Racismo

[redacted] 15 hor

ASCOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO, SON REALMENTE REPUGNANTES EN TODO ASPECTO!!!!!!!!!!!

Responder · Compartir

[redacted] .l castigo tuvo que llegar por comerse a cada ser viviente que camine. Y por culpa d esta especie "chinos" tendremos que pagar todos a nivel mundial.. la naturaleza ya se manifesto

[redacted]

Esa raza de gente , viendo las porquerias que comen , no me generan ningun tipo de piedad.......son una plaga como las cucarachas .

Responder · Comp

[redacted]

Los chinos apagaban la.luz de los super para atrapar su cena

DAN PENA

Esa raza va a invadir el mundo y logicamente lo peor de ellos ya vino para Argentina

Responder · C

[redacted] Voy a prender fuego el.chino de la vuelta de casa...

¿Que piensan?

Más opiniones

Crear una comunidad para combatir la discriminación

Coronavirus es la excusa de xenofofia

Al pensar y leer esto me duele el alma.

Ahora no sólo me siento insegura salir de mi casa por ser mujer, sino también asiática

Los asiáticos son más higiénicos que nosotros, yo salgo con un barbijo y piensan que tengo cáncer

+tienen q sentir lastima x la vaca credo pollo q consumen acá ósea

Si llegan a tener asco de q los asiáticos comen cualquiera tipo de carne y les da lastima +

La gente q hace eso es una mierda de persona

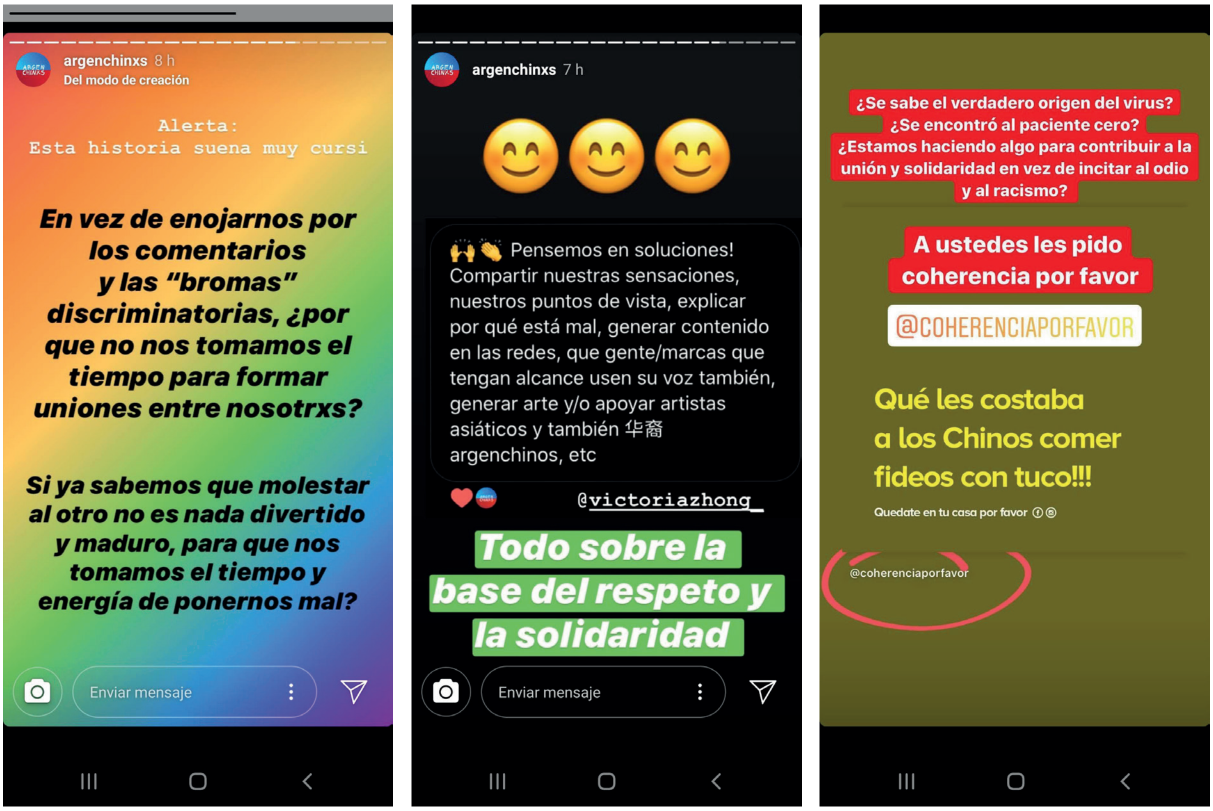
这世界上确实有很多不同的人，我也不想一棍子打死所有阿根廷人但说真的，阿根廷排外特严重

Traducción:
“No quiero meter a todxs en la misma bolsa pero la xenofobia en Argentina es un tema muy serio”

Figures 24-25

eral sources enhanced the need for the Chinese community to create new digital spaces to share their experiences. In this context, interesting discussions evolved. These addressed the need to stop talking about races because all people were human and pointed out that differences between them were actually derived from cultural habits and institutions. Moreover, the often criticized consumption of supposedly exotic animals in Asia was defended by highlighting the high consumption of meat in Argentina. All these explanations were summarized and distributed by one highly influential social media account of Chinese migrants and their descendants in Argentina (24, 25) and received the support of their Argentine followers.

2. *Mutual encouragement to act*. Subsequently, through various social media accounts, other Chinese migrants and their descendants encouraged their *followers* to organize actively and fight Anti-Asian racism. In this context, one particularly active *influencer* publicly asked her interlocutors either to explain the background to the related accusations when encountering racist *memes*, or alternatively to send them to her. This was ‘a task for everyone and among everyone’. Moreover, two ethnic Chinese administrators of the Sino-Argentine Instagram accounts of *MandarinLab* and *Argenchinxs* started to propose solutions and ideas on how to end Anti-Asian racism, stating that the first step towards this goal was to unite and stand together (26, 27, 28).



Alerta:
Esta historia suena muy cursi

En vez de enojarnos por los comentarios y las "bromas" discriminatorias, ¿por que no nos tomamos el tiempo para formar uniones entre nosotrxs?

Si ya sabemos que molestar al otro no es nada divertido y maduro, para que nos tomamos el tiempo y energía de ponernos mal?

🙌👏 Pensemos en soluciones! Compartir nuestras sensaciones, nuestros puntos de vista, explicar por qué está mal, generar contenido en las redes, que gente/marcas que tengan alcance usen su voz también, generar arte y/o apoyar artistas asiáticos y también 华裔 argenchinos, etc

@victoriazhong_

Todo sobre la base del respeto y la solidaridad

¿Se sabe el verdadero origen del virus? ¿Se encontró al paciente cero? ¿Estamos haciendo algo para contribuir a la unión y solidaridad en vez de incitar al odio y al racismo?

A ustedes les pido coherencia por favor

@COHERENCIAPORFAVOR

Qué les costaba a los Chinos comer fideos con tuco!!!

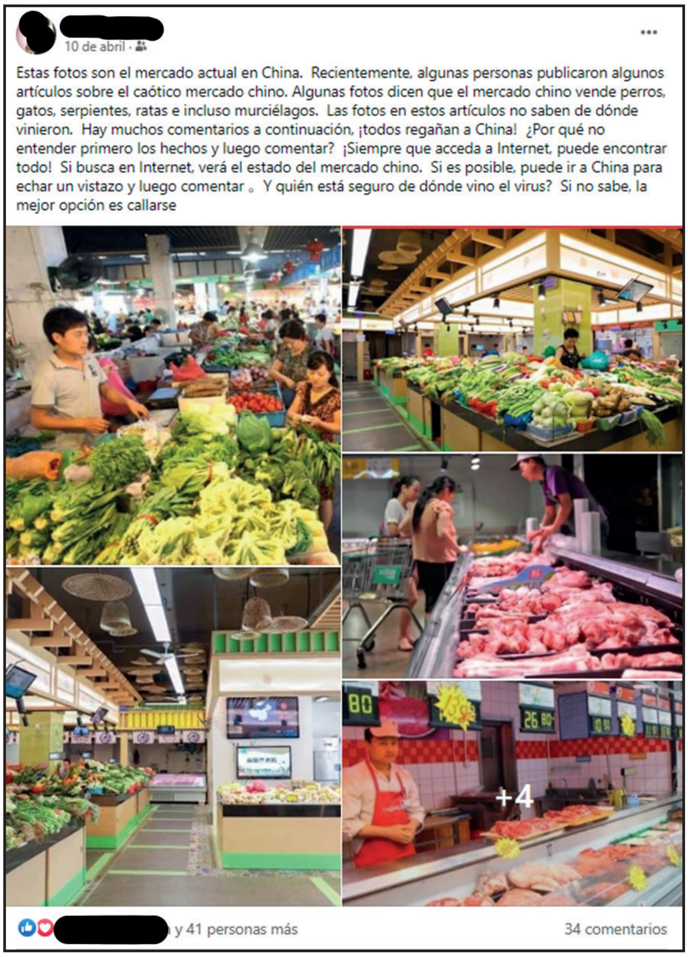
Quedate en tu casa por favor

@coherenciaporfavor

Figures 26-28

3. *Spontaneous personal discourses*. Encouraged by their initial success in communicating new solutions, Chinese residents increasingly began to speak up for themselves independently. Among other themes, they defended the hygienic conditions of Chinese food markets. Referring to several published pictures of apparently Chinese merchants selling the meat of wild animals such as rats, bats, or dogs, one Chinese immigrant stressed the unreliability of the internet and published pictures of hygienic food fairs, stating that 'these pictures showed the actual Chinese market' (29). In thus separating China from the Covid-19-related prejudice of Chinese traders disregarding hygienic standards, she was among the first to go beyond the Covid-19-specific counter-reactions to Sinophobia that were gradually being organized and started defeating general sinophobic stereotypes. Subsequently, yet other migrants started to speak up for themselves in a similar fashion (30, 31, 32), thereby gradually turning the publication of anti-sinophobic statements into a habit. Lastly, an increasing number of Argentine citizens supported these efforts, some stating that 'those who always blame Asia' were irresponsible and not to be taken seriously (33).

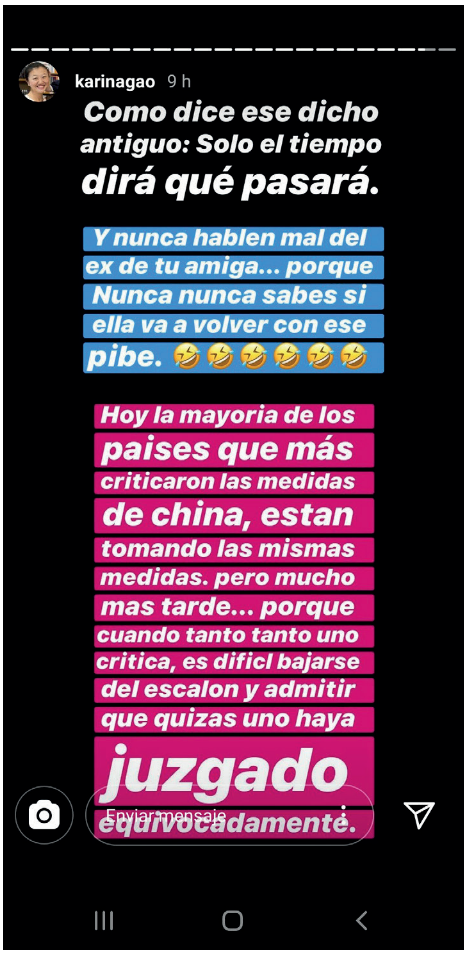
4. *Profound comprehension of personal and collective social positions*. Victoria Zhong, a second-generation Chinese immigrant born and raised in Argentina with a large digital community of both Chinese and Argentine *followers*, is a well-known local *influencer.* While she had long attempted to bridge the gap between the Chinese community and their Argentine host society, her popularity increased significantly throughout the pandemic. She publicly analysed her Covid-19-related personal experiences and social relations. Her reflections demonstrated her ability to objectify her own position within her social space and obtain a high level of expertise regarding the different implications related to it. For example, she highlighted the importance of 'harmony' as a traditional value based on the relevance of Confucianism in Chinese culture. Moreover, she perceived herself as being in a position to introduce mechanisms of change in a country where racist jokes were widely tolerated by the general population (34).



[redacted]
10 de abril ·

Estas fotos son el mercado actual en China. Recientemente, algunas personas publicaron algunos artículos sobre el caótico mercado chino. Algunas fotos dicen que el mercado chino vende perros, gatos, serpientes, ratas e incluso murciélagos. Las fotos en estos artículos no saben de dónde vinieron. Hay muchos comentarios a continuación, ¡todos regañan a China! ¿Por qué no entender primero los hechos y luego comentar? ¡Siempre que acceda a Internet, puede encontrar todo! Si busca en Internet, verá el estado del mercado chino. Si es posible, puede ir a China para echar un vistazo y luego comentar 。 Y quién está seguro de dónde vino el virus? Si no sabe, la mejor opción es callarse

[redacted] y 41 personas más 34 comentarios

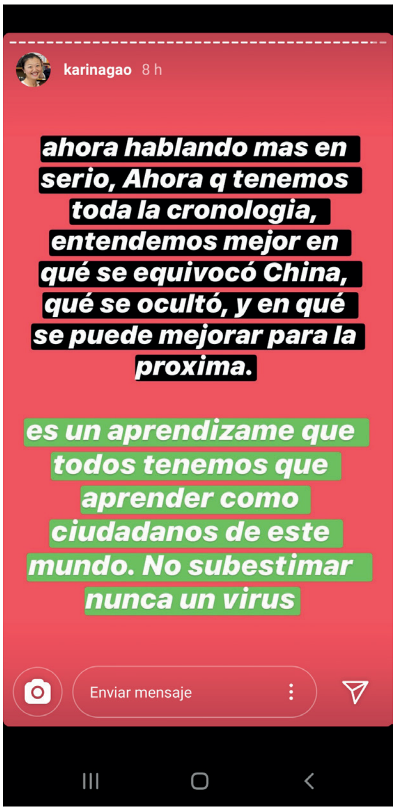


karinagao 9 h

Como dice ese dicho antiguo: Solo el tiempo dirá qué pasará.

Y nunca hablen mal del ex de tu amiga... porque Nunca nunca sabes si ella va a volver con ese pibe. 🤣🤣🤣🤣🤣🤣

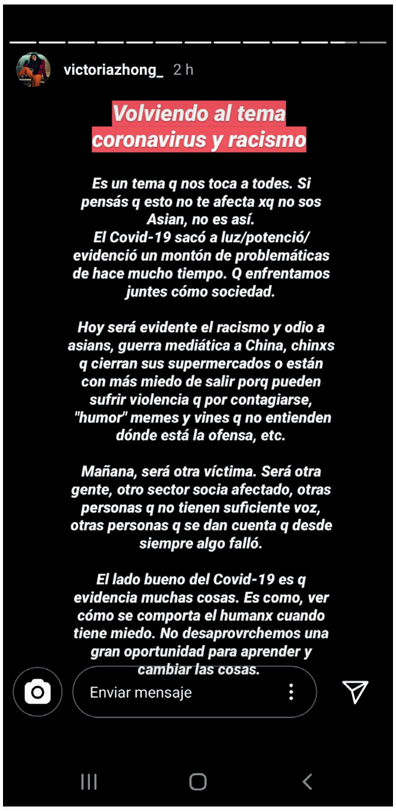
Hoy la mayoria de los paises que más criticaron las medidas de china, estan tomando las mismas medidas. pero mucho mas tarde... porque cuando tanto tanto uno critica, es dificl bajarse del escalon y admitir que quizas uno haya juzgado equivocadamente.



karinagao 8 h

ahora hablando mas en serio, Ahora q tenemos toda la cronologia, entendemos mejor en qué se equivocó China, qué se ocultó, y en qué se puede mejorar para la proxima.

es un aprendizame que todos tenemos que aprender como ciudadanos de este mundo. No subestimar nunca un virus



victoriazhong_ 2 h

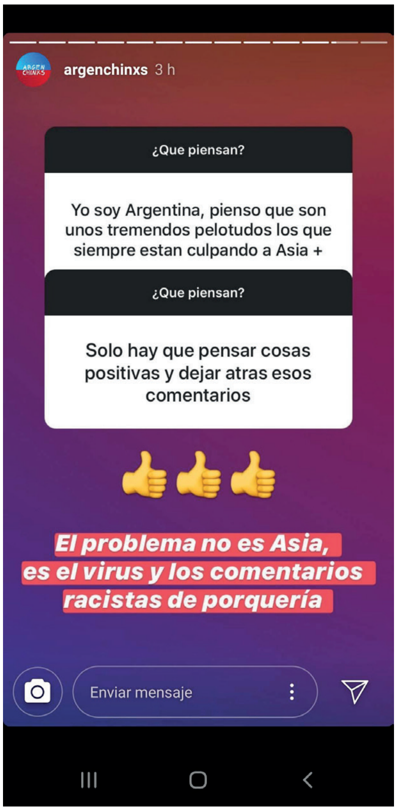
Volviendo al tema coronavirus y racismo

Es un tema q nos toca a todes. Si pensás q esto no te afecta xq no sos Asian, no es así.
El Covid-19 sacó a luz/potenció/evidenció un montón de problemáticas de hace mucho tiempo. Q enfrentamos juntes cómo sociedad.

Hoy será evidente el racismo y odio a asians, guerra mediática a China, chinxs q cierran sus supermercados o están con más miedo de salir porq pueden sufrir violencia q por contagiarse, "humor" memes y vines q no entienden dónde está la ofensa, etc.

Mañana, será otra víctima. Será otra gente, otro sector socia afectado, otras personas q no tienen suficiente voz, otras personas q se dan cuenta q desde siempre algo falló.

El lado bueno del Covid-19 es q evidencia muchas cosas. Es como, ver cómo se comporta el humanx cuando tiene miedo. No desaprovrchemos una gran oportunidad para aprender y cambiar las cosas.



argenchinxs 3 h

¿Que piensan?

Yo soy Argentina, pienso que son unos tremendos pelotudos los que siempre estan culpando a Asia +

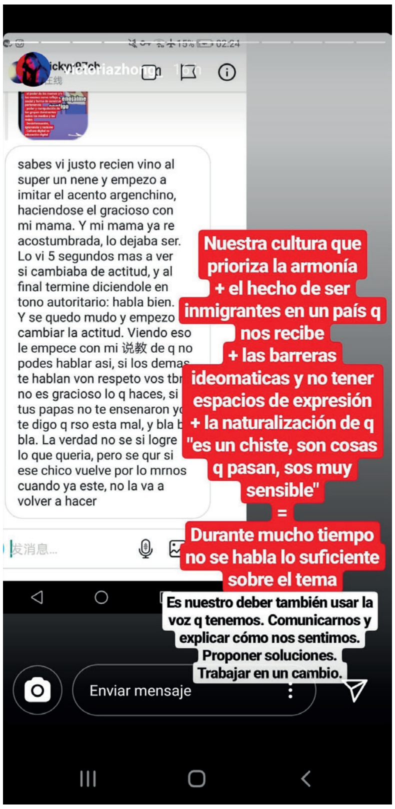
¿Que piensan?

Solo hay que pensar cosas positivas y dejar atras esos comentarios

👍👍👍

El problema no es Asia, es el virus y los comentarios racistas de porquería

Figures 29-33

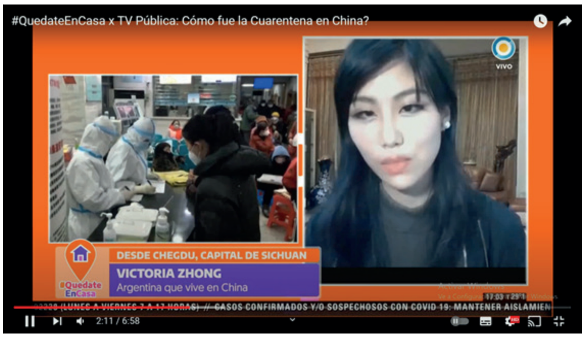


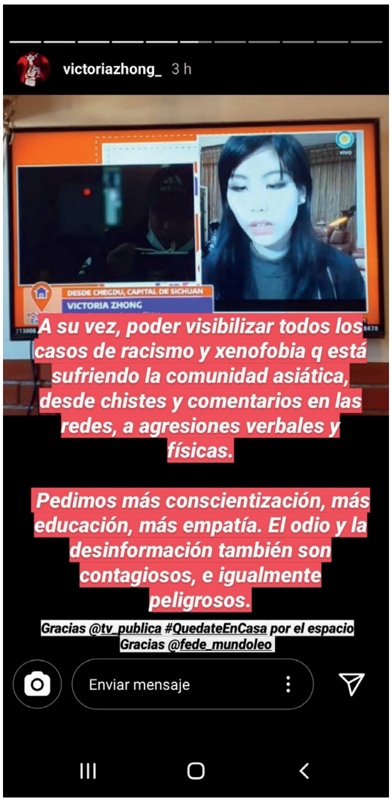
sabes vi justo recien vino al super un nene y empezo a imitar el acento argenchino, haciendose el gracioso con mi mama. Y mi mama ya re acostumbrada, lo dejaba ser. Lo vi 5 segundos mas a ver si cambiaba de actitud, y al final termine diciendole en tono autoritario: habla bien. Y se quedo mudo y empezo cambiar la actitud. Viendo eso le empece con mi 说教 de q no podes hablar asi, si los demas te hablan von respeto vos tb no es gracioso lo q haces, si tus papas no te ensenaron yo te digo q rso esta mal, y bla b bla. La verdad no se si logre lo que queria, pero se qur si ese chico vuelve por lo mrnos cuando ya este, no la va a volver a hacer

Nuestra cultura que
prioriza la armonía
+ el hecho de ser
inmigrantes en un país q
nos recibe
+ las barreras
ideomaticas y no tener
espacios de expresión
+ la naturalización de q
"es un chiste, son cosas
q pasan, sos muy
sensible"
=
Durante mucho tiempo
no se habla lo suficiente
sobre el tema

Es nuestro deber también usar la
voz q tenemos. Comunicarnos y
explicar cómo nos sentimos.
Proponer soluciones.
Trabajar en un cambio.

Figure 34


#QuedateEnCasa x TV Pública: Cómo fue la Cuarentena en China?
VIVO
DESDE CHEGDU, CAPITAL DE SICHUAN
VICTORIA ZHONG
Argentina que vive en China
#Quedate EnCasa
CASOS CONFIRMADOS Y/O SOSPECHOSOS CON COVID 19: MANTENER AISLAMIEN
2:11 / 6:58



A su vez, poder visibilizar todos los casos de racismo y xenofobia q está sufriendo la comunidad asiática, desde chistes y comentarios en las redes, a agresiones verbales y físicas.

Pedimos más conscientización, más educación, más empatía. El odio y la desinformación también son contagiosos, e igualmente peligrosos.

Gracias @tv_publica #QuedateEnCasa por el espacio
Gracias @fede_mundoleo

Figures 35-36

These statements generated further reflections on the status of Chinese migrant groups in Argentina. Among other things, she pointed out the significant differences between older and newer generations of immigrants and their descendants. On this basis, Victoria became a central figure for the bottom-up dynamics of Chinese migrant groups in Argentina.

Outcome: speaking up to a wider public and the authorities. Finally, several media institutions began to report on Victoria's discourse. Among others, an Argentine television show invited her to report on her perceptions of the increasing cases of anti-Chinese discrimination. According to Victoria, these had amounted to at least three cases per week, which clearly revealed the need for further education, empathy and awareness (35, 36). In addition, she publicly called for more control of 'fake news' and stressed the necessity to be more cautious with potential disinformation by verifying contents and sources before sharing them on social media.

A few months later, Victoria raised the same demands at a further meeting organized by the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism of Argentina (INADI). This time, she was able to speak to more than sixty representatives of different associations and migrant collectives and to point out the importance of an anti-sinophobic movement to the authorities (37). She particularly stressed three main aspects shaping Sinophobia, as well as potential countermeasures, in Argentina. These included the manipulation of data and the resulting need for education in digital spaces and social networks; the strong tendencies of mass media to distribute false information and their responsibility for verifying their sources; and the need for awareness of racist tendencies in jokes and *memes*. In addition, she pointed out the necessity of listen-

jitsi.org
REC
SD

Figure 37

ing to the voices of the migrants themselves and to take them seriously when engaging in public discourses.

On this basis, we define our outcome as the capacity of the formerly silent Chinese minority to reach out to a wider public within their host society, both beyond their own migrant groups and beyond digital media. This outcome, we argue, is manifested by Victoria's public speeches on Argentine TV and to the public authorities.

Discussion and Conclusion

Along with global developments, racist discrimination against Chinese immigrants in Argentina, their descendants and ethnic Asians in general strongly increased after the outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic in 2019. As a response, a wide-reaching countermovement to Sinophobia evolved. The aim of the present study has been to shed light on the process of the Chinese community in Argentina in organizing this structured countermovement. On this basis, we attempted to identify new forms of racialization and digital anti-Sinophobia.

Using an institutionalist lens on racism to identify the bottom-up dynamics of displacement enhanced by the formerly silent Chinese minority, we thus identified the following causal mechanism. Before Covid-19, the mutually reinforcing phenomenon of frequently expressed but rather subtle racism against the Chinese minority in Argentina and the latter's limited tools with which to respond had constantly shaped the image of a silent minority. Occasional actions to challenge discrimination remained isolated and lacked final improvements. As the more subtle forms of Sinophobia were increasingly institutionalized from the outbreak of Covid-19, their sources and consequences became more visible and increased the need to react.

As a first step, Chinese immigrants in Argentina identified domestic sources of racism, including media discourses, without further reflection, thus enhancing direct discrimination by the host population. Secondly, the wider scope of transnational anti-racist movements, enhanced by both ethnic Chinese and Asian people in third states, and by other racialized groups within and beyond Argentina, were evaluated and used as tools with which to construct a certain 'toolkit' adapted to their own increasingly organized movement. This was eased by the extensive use of digital networks allowing the rapid transfer of information. On this basis, ethnic Chinese inhabitants in Argentina began to encourage one another not only to draw increasing attention to ongoing problems, but also to explain prejudices and actively refute them. These increasingly structured counter-reactions finally allowed their profound understanding of their own social position within the Argentine society to emerge. Their systematic identification of necessary steps to empowerment became powerful enough to evoke the attention of state agencies. This allowed the migrants to make their voices heard with the public authorities, thereby providing the basis for potential institutional change at the macro-level.

Although the outcome of the process analysed in this study does not imply a final institutional change to the wide acceptance of Sinophobia in Argentina (yet), the counter-reactions of ethnic Chinese to institutionalized racism strongly indicate a cumulative process heading towards this final goal through displacement. In particular, digital networks have played an increasingly important role in the emergence of anti-racist movements. The case of Argentina thus demonstrates the importance and applicability of digital counter-reactions to racism as a tool allowing formerly silent minorities to make their voices heard. On this basis, we wish to underline the importance of the digital dynamics of anti-racism

STEP	INITIAL ENVIRONMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM	INPUT	PHASE 1: INTERNAL INFLUENCES	PHASE 2: EXTERNAL INFLUENCES	PHASE 3: TOWARDS AN INCREASINGLY ORGANIZED MOVEMENT	OUTCOME
Observable mechanism	Subtle racism against Chinese minority → Missing tools to defend themselves: 'Silent minority'	Covid-19 enhancing institutional racism and the necessity for migrants to react	1) Identification of increasingly sinophobic media discourses 2) Identification of an increasingly directly expressed Sinophobia	1) Globally increasing Sinophobia and counter movements 2) Globally increasing Asiophobia and counter movements 3) Incorporation of further global and domestic anti-racist movements → 'Toolkit' for increasingly explicit identification and expression of concerns	1) Creation of new spaces for debate 2) Mutual encouragement to act 3) Spontaneous personal discourses 4) Profound comprehension of personal and collective social position	Organized bottom-up movement of formerly silent minority → Capacity to report experience to a wide audience within the host society and receive support

Table 1. Illustration of causal mechanisms leading to organized anti-sinophobic activities in Argentina [authors' elaboration].

as a conceptual framework for further research on both racism and social (counter)movements.

Moreover, we argue that the gradual formation of a bottom-up movement was of great importance to the Chinese diaspora. First, its members found the tools and platforms to discuss and defeat prejudices related to Covid-19, and thereby started to challenge the increasingly institutionalized racism being directed against them. Second, further observations after our period of analysis confirm that Chinese immigrants in Argentina continue to share their experiences and denounce racist discrimination. For example, a group of second-generation Chinese immigrants gained much attention and support through their denunciation of racist treatment in an Argentinian shopping centre in late 2020. Similarly, in September 2020, a famous journalist was officially denounced by more than 50 Chinese immigrants and numerous Argentinian supporters for having publicly attacked Chinese people for being responsible for the pandemic (e.g., IProfesional 2020). In sum, the formerly silent minority of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in Argentina has finally found its voice.

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Note on the Authors

Clara Baumann is a PhD researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the University of Duisburg-Essen, and a member of the International Max Planck Research School on the Social and Political Constitution of the Economy (IMPRS-SPCE) in Cologne. In her dissertation, she explores the impact of South-South investments for their target-country development, focusing on Chinese FDI in Latin America. Her further research interests include South-South migration, racism, and regimes of inclusion and exclusion in a globalised world. **baumann@mpifg.de**

Luciana Denardi is a PhD Social Anthropologist (National University of San Martín) and a researcher at the Scientific and Technical National Research Council (CONICET) of Argentina. Since 2012 she has conducted ethnographic fieldwork to explore different aspects of Chinese migration in Buenos Aires. Since then, she published articles based on: identities, associations, rituals, gender and educational issues. Her last publication is: “Today we are all Chinatown : identity struggle and strategic uses of culture in Buenos Aires´s Chinatown” in a compilation titled *China in Argentina: Ethnographies of a Global Expansion* published by Palgrave Macmillan (2022). **ldenardi@unsam.edu.ar**

Racialization and Racisms in and beyond Covid, Colour and the Global South: An Afterword

by DIANA YEH (City, University of London)

Keywords: racialization, racisms, postcoloniality, relationality, epistemic justice, decolonizing knowledge

As Covid-19 unleashed a global health crisis, causing innumerable deaths and devastating communities worldwide, it also became widely acknowledged to shed light on and exacerbate stark inequalities in social life across the globe. In a historical conjuncture marked by rising nationalism and populism and the normalization of bordering practices, the spread of the virus has catalysed the literal suspension of human mobility on multiple scales, intermittently pausing international travel, closing national borders and imposing regional and local lockdowns with injunctions to individuals and communities to 'stay at home'. At the same time, the pandemic has sparked a proliferation of new social boundary-making processes, which both aggravate existing inequalities and give rise to new ones. It is not only that the disproportionate effects of Covid are experienced differently across the globe, nor that existing social hierarchies and forms of discrimination have meant that racially minoritized and migrant groups have suffered higher proportions of rates of infection and deaths or losses of businesses and jobs, as well as racist and xenophobic attacks. Rather, as this Special Issue highlights, the pandemic is producing forms of racialization and practices of social boundary making and unmaking that demand new ways of thinking about and responding to racialized inequalities and violence in contemporary social life as they intersect with and are shaped by other forms of oppression.

Despite this, however, it is evident that it is not only pandemic conditions that have given rise to a new complexity of racialization processes and their acknowledgement. In this commentary, I discuss how the articles in this Special Issue contribute to a growing body of scholarship which offers new avenues for thinking about the complexity of racialization and its complex imbrication with other social boundary-making processes. In particular, the Special Issue presents challenges to dominant ways of understanding what constitutes racialization, where it is located and who its agents are, thereby contributing new insights into work taking place at the nexus of race-migration research, in the Global South and 'beyond colour'.

I begin by situating the articles in this Special Issue in the wider field of work that seeks to decentre research on race and racisms, exploring the contributions in terms of examining new racialization processes in the Global South and how they are connected to the Global North through contemporary reconfigurations of colonial modes of racialization. I then examine questions raised by the articles in relation to the concept of racialization and its relationship to both 'race' and 'racism', arguing for a relational approach that attends to the ways in which local manifestations of racialization and exclusionary practice, including governmental techniques of oppression, may be linked and understood across different contexts. I end by arguing that these articles provoke a series of questions that provide directions for future research with regard to how knowledge production on race and racisms can be decolonized and how we might work towards epistemic and social justice in the fields of race and migration studies.

Expanding the Field of Racialization and Racisms

This Special Issue expands our understandings and deepens analysis of race and racialization and of migration studies by examining disparate cases of racialization during the Covid pandemic across Africa, Asia and South America. By investigating the racialized othering of Africa migrants in South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, of internal migrant workers in Bangladesh's garment industry, and of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in Argentina, the articles together posit racialization as a complex, multi-layered process, unfolding at the intersection of local state responses to the global health crisis and internal and external migration controls, and underpinned by the forces of global capitalism and its impact on local contexts. They join several recent publications which testify to a growth in research on racisms and racialization in a range of Global South contexts in the last few years (e.g., Bonnett 2021; Ang, Ho and Yeoh 2022; Modood and Sealy 2022). While this body of work suggests an emergent field at this historical conjuncture, this is not to say that there have not been wider histories of work both in the recent and more distant past. These include works such as Syed Hussein Alatas's 1977 work, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, examining Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, to more recent offerings such as Frank Dikotter's 1992 work on race in modern China, as well as the ongoing work by the late Ian Law (2010) on the histories of global race thinking and on racisms in the Caribbean (with Shirley Ann Tate) and in communist and post-Communist contexts, to name but a few.

Like much of this growing body of scholarship, this Special Issue seeks to decentre western notions of race and racisms. While racism is often seen as originating in western colonialism and thus commonly assumed to be a uniquely Western project (Bonnett 2022), there is a general consensus of the necessity to examine racisms and racialization in plural forms. Although this Special Issue focuses on the Global South, the editors are careful not to reify the North-South binary and have gathered papers that extend beyond identifying a specific model of South-South racialization. Rather, the contributions are alive to the salience of indigenous concepts in contemporary racialization processes, but they also point to the interconnectedness of racialization across the Global South and North. In contributing work to the wider field of Global South racialization, the papers in this Special Issue also develop work on Covid racialization in new directions, as well as on the complexity of racialization itself, as it unfolds along multiple axes of inequality. Importantly, in most of the articles, these themes are brought together through a focus on the continuing significance of European colonial legacies of racialization, which are reconfigured in contemporary postcolonial / neo-colonial contexts during Covid to produce new forms of otherness, exclusion and oppression, as discussed next. This is significant as, in the growing body of scholarship on Global South racialization and racisms beyond colour, a focus on indigenous concepts and the impact of non-European empires risks leading to a disavowal of the continuing global effects of European colonization in shaping contemporary racialization and inequalities, whether in or beyond postcolonial states.

Covid-19, Racialization and Postcoloniality

While most of the scholarship in the Global North has focused attention on the racialization of Covid-19 as a 'Chinese' virus, attention has also been paid to the proliferation of racialized discourses suggesting that the virus is the result of a Jewish or Muslim conspiracy. In this Special Issue, while Baumann and Denardi relocate an examination of the racialization of Covid as Chinese to the Global South by examining its impact in Argentina, the other contributions further expand our understandings of the ways in which Covid has been racialized in other ways. In both the papers by Vaughn, Kiconco, Quartey, Smith and Ziz and by Musariri, Covid is constructed across different African contexts – South Africa, Kenya and Ghana – as a 'colonial virus' brought into Africa by (neo)colonial powers and a rich, predominantly white migrant's disease. Here, too, the Chinese are constructed as a racialized source of the virus and as posing a greater risk of spreading it. Unlike in the Global North, however, this does not take place through a process of inferiorization, but rather in response to both China's position as a neocolonial power in African contexts, and racist practices towards Africans within its own national borders. While further analysis could have been provided comparing the specific ways in which Chinese as opposed to white racialization takes place in the chosen fieldsites of South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, the papers' key concerns lie rather in the devastating impact of the racialization of Africans – as both Self and Other.

Leona Vaughn et al. take research on the Covid infodemic in new directions by examining the Black immunity myth. In doing so, they highlight the continuation of global racial ideologies and the legacies of colonialism in the infrastructure, institutions and logics of decision-making across South Africa, Kenya and Ghana and in the racialization of the risk narratives regarding Covid-19. Yet, they argue that the most colonial aspect of all this lies in the 'monument of biological or scientific "race"', perhaps because, as their article demonstrates, it not only delimits contemporary forms of resistance, but also actively endangers the lives of those who are racialized as Black. For Vaughan et al., the myth of African people being innately immune to Covid-19 is based on 'the eugenicist, racist belief in "biological race"'. Accordingly they frame the impact of racialization and notions of racialized risk explicitly as a 'colonial project'. Despite the differences in the ways in which the myth unfolds across the three states, Vaughan et al. nonetheless argue for an acknowledgement of the ways in which colonialism and coloniality continue to scar human relations in these different contexts.

While Musariri also acknowledges the Black immunity myth, her analysis examines the shift in South Africa from a racial to a national discourse of othering as specific nationalities among migrant Africans become scapegoats for the ills of the pandemic and are constructed as economic parasites who should be excluded from the nation's borders. Despite this, her paper confirms the centrality of European colonial racial ideology in devastating the lives of these migrant Black Africans, especially those perceived to be in poverty or from poorer nations. In South Africa, she argues, their categorization 'as non-citizens and less than human cannot be divorced from western racial ideology, which is premised on white supremacy'. Here, as in the Global North too, as acknowledged in the wider bodies of literature, while particularly poor, racialized migrants are to be expelled from the nation-state as interlopers, white migrants from rich nations are rarely viewed as foreigners but instead enjoy the privileged position of being constructed as 'tourists', 'expatriates' or 'travellers' who pose no threat to the nation state. In the case of South Africa, however, it was during colonial rule that white settlers identified themselves as 'true' South Africans and racialized Black South Africans as 'foreign natives'. In the contemporary context, this colonial racial discourse is reproduced to racialize black African migrants from poorer countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Somalia and Ethiopia as 'foreigners'. Thus, although Musariri posits xenophobia as a new form of racialization that is not based on phenotypical difference, but located at the intersection of class, nationality and immigration status, she nonetheless highlights that this occurs in a particular context of power defined by former colonial rule. Unable to target whites, Black South Africans instead target poor Black migrants. In this scenario, as she summarizes, 'white South Africans and white migrants remain unscathed and their foreignness unquestioned, making it a battle against the black minorities: native minority and migrant minority.' New processes of racialization, then, leave the power of whiteness intact: Musariri's paper confirms previous research that the racism directed at Black South Africans during apartheid has given way to racism towards migrant Africans in the post-apartheid era (Matsinhe 2011).

In their article, Siddiqi and Ashraf further expose the ways in which colonial modes of othering and exclusion are reconfigured in the Covid era by examining the ways in which migrant garment workers in Bangladesh are racialized as dispensable labour as part of wider racialized geographies of supply chain capitalism. In doing so, they make a significant contribution to work on the troubled category of the 'essential worker' and the politics of expendability that has been reinvigorated by Covid-19 but remains largely focused on the Global North. By locating their study within a framework of racialized capitalism, they also contribute to wider research on globalization, gender and development, which has by and large erased questions of 'race'. While the question of gender remains relatively invisible across the other papers, Siddiqi and Ashraf adopt a transnational feminist lens. Through a multi-scalar analysis, they demonstrate that government techniques and practices draw on colonial constructions of submissive, oppressed Muslim women, which intersect with local indigenous concepts of class/caste, gendered nationalist ideologies and global racial hierarchies in apparel supply chains to make garment workers expendable. Here, they point to the significance of the category of *bhadralok* in reinforcing middle-class boundary-making during Covid. This self-ascribed identity among a largely English-educated middle class, a mainly Hindu upper caste, emerged in colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century and was deployed as a form of distinction from the labouring *chotolok*, who were further constructed through racialized colonial 'myths' of the lazy native. In contemporary Bangladesh, such tropes are reconfigured to construct working-class bodies as 'non-agentic' and 'animal-like' with no rights as workers or subjectivities as human beings. The article thus speaks to the 'robust afterlife' of colonial racialized and gendered distinctions. However, while positing that racialization has always been a deeply gendered process, and while highlighting the dual construction of female garment workers as saviours of the nation and as sexually lax lower-class others, what they find to be distinctive under Covid is that, in the logic and discourses of disposability, both male and female labouring bodies are affected in ways that are only minimally inflected by gender or sexualization.

While the three articles discussed so far emphasize the ways in which colonial modes of thinking survive in present-day forms of racialization, the article by Baumann and Denardi makes relatively scant mention of the enduring significance of European colonialism beyond its initial shaping of racialized dynamics in Argentina. Here the colonial myth that 'Argentines "descend from the boats"' constructed indigenous people, and racially minoritized immigrants and their descendants, as 'others' and continues to shape state racism. Nonetheless, the article provides a contribution to the study of racism in Latin America and the Caribbean, which they argue is defined by its disavowal, the scarce research focusing on indigenous people and *mestizos* rather than immigrants from abroad.

However, unlike the other articles, Baumann and Denardi focus specifically on how new forms of racialization generate new forms of anti-racist mobilization, in this case, the ways in which the racialization of Covid has led to the digital empowerment of a new anti-racist movement among the Chinese in Argentina. Their work thus also contributes to encouraging analysis of the interconnectedness of racialization in the Global North and Global South in terms of the experiences of Chinese diasporas under Covid. While the histories of the Chinese in Argentina and in Britain cannot be compared, given the Chinese presence in the latter dating back to at least the seventeenth century, there are similarities in the catalyst Covid has provided for anti-racist mobilization among Chinese groups across these Global North and Global South contexts. In my own work, I identify a historically significant moment for anti-racist mobilization among Chinese and wider East and Southeast Asian communities in the UK, especially among university-educated younger generations. As in Argentina, this activism occurs in response to an absence of state intervention to protect communities from the rise in racial violence that is not limited to 'spectacular' physical attacks but also to the loss of jobs, forms of discrimination and the widespread racisms that circulate in the media and political discourse. Like those studied by Baumann and Denardi, Covid-19 has sparked an emergence of racial consciousness among many of the individuals and groups I work with, who also find inspiration in transnational influences, particularly in the US. In Britain, however, what is also notable is that Covid-19 has contributed to the growth of wider pan-ethnic anti-racist mobilizations, leading to a new significance of the 'ESEA' (East and Southeast Asian) category (Yeh 2021 and 2018). I therefore argue that scholars must acknowledge the ways in which our perspectives can no longer be contained within the colonial borders of an area studies that is defined by "Chineseness" (Yeh 2020). The extent to which this claim might pertain to Argentina depends in part on forms of anti-racist mobilization on the ground. However, a reading of Baumann and Denardi's work in the context of my own, and the wider issues raised by the Special Issue, also raises questions with regard to relationality in theorizing racialization and racisms, as well as to how we might decentre our studies and in doing so contribute to the decolonization of knowledge production. These I discuss in turn in the next two sections.

Racialization, Racisms and Relationality

Taken together, the articles in this Special Issue, as well as the wider body of research on racisms across the globe, continue to raise enduring questions about what constitutes racialization, its conceptual clarity and flexibility, and its relationship to both 'race' and 'racism'. While the proliferation and new visibility of research in this area is providing a rich, complex mix of studies across a wide array of local contexts, its widespread use as a catch-all term may mean that it is under-theorized and therefore risks losing its analytical power. Further, Gonzalez-Sobrino and Goss (2019: 507), also arguing that 'the concept of racialization is applied to every type of racial process, often without specificity', remind us that, 'while scholars discuss the effects of racialization on varied people and circumstances, a precise understanding of the mechanisms by which it functions is still lacking from the conversation'.

While, in the emerging research, many claims about the 'newness' of current forms of racisms and racialization are based on the idea that they unfold 'beyond colour', longstanding debates have identified a lack of clarity in the ways in which racialization is used in contexts where racial meanings are inferred through ethnicity or culture. As Murji and Solomos (2005: 4) state: 'It is not always clear what the race in racialization refers to – a specific and narrow discourse of biologically distinctive races, a process of cultural differentiation, or a code in which the idea or language of race is not manifest at all.' While scholarship has often focused on racialization processes that are based on phenotypical difference, scholars such as Miles have long suggested that we 'must not restrict the application of the concept of racialisation to situations where people distinguish one another by reference to skin colour' (1982: 121). Ideas of 'new racism' (Barker 1981) have also focused attention not on biological or phenotypical difference, but rather on cultural difference.

In the emerging body of scholarship, we see in racialization processes a 'fracturing' of race (Ang 2021) in, for example, the concept of 'co-ethnic racialization'. As discussed above, this does not involve making distinctions based on phenotype, but rather, as we have seen, and as Lan, Sier and Camenisch argue, on 'a multitude of factors such as ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, language and culture'. Erel and Murji (2016) also identify a growing body of research that examines 'differentialist' racialization processes that involve hierarchies of legal status, gender, culture, class and social space. However, Anthias and Yuval-Davis have long argued that an analysis of racisms requires 'addressing the ways in which the categories of difference and exclusion on the basis of class, gender and ethnicity incorporate processes of racialization and are intertwined in producing racist discourses and outcomes' (1992: 2-3). This also requires examining how exclusion and subordination intersect with state and nation, as demonstrated by several of the papers in this Special Issue. What is key here is that, for them, 'the specificity of racism lies in its working on the notion of ethnic groupings. It is a discourse and practice of inferiorizing ethnic groups. Racism need not rely on a process of racialization' (1992: 12).

The question then remains to what extent are the distinct and diverse processes described across specific global contexts in the emerging literature captured by the concept of racialization and to what extent this aids our understanding of the dynamics of different forms of racism. As the papers in this Special Issue demonstrate, this complexity arises in part due to the specificity of local historical, political, legal and cultural contexts and the need to be alert to the specific mechanisms at work in differently shaped contexts. The necessity, called for by Musariri, of attending to the nuanced understandings of difference and 'foreignness' within specific historical and contemporary socio-economic and political contexts across different sites also destabilizes the translatability of the meanings of central concepts.

In particular, Vaughan et al. identified Kenya and South Africa as sites of research due to challenges made by government officials about Black immunity, while treating Ghana as a comparator where no such statements were made. While in their analysis more attention was in fact required to elucidate the comparative angle across different African countries, their paper nonetheless raises a broader methodological question with regard to the value of comparativism in the study of race, racialization and racisms. As Goldberg (2009) has argued, comparative studies depend on the possibility of geographical discreteness and are unable to account for the ways in which racial conception and practice are relational and interactive. Notably, he highlights that the interactional, relational method of theorizing race and racisms is tied to the work of scholars such as W.E.B du Bois, Ruth Benedict, Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, who linked racial conceptualization and expression to the colonial condition. The point for Goldberg is not to reduce racism to colonial oppression but rather to highlight the way in which the colonial has provided the 'horizons of possibility' for race-thinking. Thus, although the papers in this Special Issue do focus on postcolonial states, their emphasis on the continuing effects of coloniality on contemporary inequalities has wider significance. Baber (2022: 161) recently makes a similar argument when noting that a specifically modern form of racism was spread globally and that, 'depending on the specific conjunction of historical, structural and political circumstances … various ideologies of racism are interpreted, reformulated, internalised and selectively deployed by the dominant classes and elites of these societies to pursue their own interests and hegemonic projects that produce new forms of racialised class inequalities.' This recognition is vitally important given the rise of post-racial discourses and analyses (Erel et al. 2016) that seek to undermine the continuing effects of racism in contemporary social life.

Such a relational approach also enables us to recognize that local manifestations are always connected to wider sets of extra- and transterritorial arrangements, as several of the papers in this journal, particularly that by Siddiqi and Ashraf, so vividly demonstrate. By adopting a transnational, multi-scalar analytic, Siddiqi and Ashraf are able to understand what appears to be a local or national Covid crisis within the global dimensions. It also crucially provides a framework for understanding how different racist and exclusionary practices in any given locality are shaped by those elsewhere, and how state histories, logics and techniques of oppression and exploitation are linked across different contexts (Goldberg 2009). As I have argued here, across the papers authors highlight the legacies of colonization and colonialism in contemporary racialized state responses to the pandemic and in the shaping of policies, the ways in which they were implemented and their impact. The pandemic has been shown to provide governments with fertile ground to reinforce nationalism and neoliberalism, with campaigns in the Global North and South both shifting responsibility for the health crisis away from the state and on to the individual, who is imagined as 'an able-bodied citizen with a rooted sense of territoriality, domestic stability and equally distributed infrastructural access' (Orgad and Hegde 2022). Vaughn et al. show that in Kenya, as in multiple places across the globe, government campaigns requiring people to social distance and 'stay at home' were racialized and classed, protecting the White and wealthy. Meanwhile, essential key workers, the undocumented and imprisoned, largely made up of racialized minorities and migrants who are unable to comply, are placed at risk of falling ill and dying from Covid and are disproportionately targeted by the new special police and military powers brought in to enforce the new laws (Human Rights Watch 2020)

Authors across the papers further highlight how the pandemic has legitimized anti-immigrant discourses, providing justifications for states to tighten borders under the guise of a public health response. Siddiqi and Ashraf point to the ways in which the outbreak of Covid-19 has intensified biopolitics and enabled multiple boundary-making projects to flourish in both Global North and South contexts. As Wemyss and Yuval-Davis (2020) point out, similar biometric technologies are being used by authoritarian and liberal governments across the Global North and South in the management and surveillance of people, including those usually reserved for counter-terrorism. It has seen the expansion of grey zones, where racialized, migrant and/or undocumented workers and refugees, such as those identified by Vaughan et al., Musariri and Siddiqui and Ashraf, attempt to live, though increasingly denied regular civil, political and social rights. As the articles across the Special Issue demonstrate, the ways in which these impact on particular groups of people across local contexts are vastly different; however, a relational analysis requiring a sustained analysis of the specifics of the proliferation of racialized borders helps to avoid creating hierarchies of oppression and falling into relativism. It is in this spirit, perhaps, that in their recent Special Issue journal, 'Some Forms of Racism and Anti-Racism in Asia and the Middle East', Modood and Sealy (2022: 5) employ Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblances' to bring a range of phenomena under the rubric of racialization and asks us to explore racialization through 'connected conversations'. Yet the extent to which this interconnectedness enables us to challenge Euro-Americancentric forms of analysis remains unclear, as discussed next.

Decolonizing Knowledge Production: Towards Epistemic and Social Justice

Modood and Sealy (2022) point out that claims to racism have unfolded in diverse contexts – among for example, the Rohingyas in Myanmar, the Uyghurs in China and the Dalits in India – inspired by and drawing on the discourses of the Black Lives Matter protests. Emerging shortly after the Rhodes Must Fall campaigns in South Africa in 2015, the Movement for Black Lives has also reignited renewed interest in the decolonization of knowledge, as well as heightened concerns over the dangers of work that reproduces coloniality within knowledge production under its guise (Dar, Dy and Rodriguez 2018; Appleton 2019). In examining the legacy of the racial hierarchies of empires and the development of new forms of racism outside the West, Modood and Sealy (2022) argue that emerging works in the field 'very much have decolonising logics at the heart of their intellectual and conceptual thinking and approaches'.

In this Special Issue, as already noted, the different papers identify the significance of indigenous concepts of race, class and other social distinctions as central to racialization processes (for example, the Chinese concept of *suzhi* in the Introduction by Lan, Sier and Camenisch, or the concept of *bhadralok* emerging in colonial Bengal in the article by Siddiqi and Ashraf). Another inquiry into the ways in which racialization and racisms are localized is offered by Oh (2022). Focusing on South Korea in the context of its postcolonial and neocolonial relationships, Oh points to the distinctive forms of discourse that are identified by the term *injongchabyeol*. While often translated as 'racism', according to Oh (2022), *injongchabyeol* is more accurately translated as 'anthrocategorism', since it refers to discrimination based on any kind of 'human category' and is used discursively to label simultaneous ethnic, racial, national and regional discriminations. For Oh, *injongchabyeol* is therefore able to capture local discursive terrain around difference in Korea, being part of a decolonial move to privilege indigenous meaning-making and decentre Western frameworks. Despite this, Oh recognises the affective power of the term 'racism' in challenging oppression and makes the necessary claim that the identification of a local concept in no way constitutes a dismissal or disavowal of racism in either the local context or elsewhere. Baber (2022) makes a similar point with regard to a range of racial projects in India, where speakers use a range of terms to refer to both caste and casteism, as well as race and racism respectively. He thus cites Sivanandan (1981: 193) that, 'it is practice that defines terminology, not terminology the practice'.

Beyond the identification of racism 'beyond Euro-Americancentric forms' (Modood and Sealy 2022), however, the decolonization of knowledge production requires a radical questioning of dominant epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies shaped by coloniality and the exploration of alternative means of centring the lives of those whose voices have previously been excluded from knowledge production. It also requires a recognition of the ways in which marginalized Black, indigenous, racialized, migrant, queer, women, disabled and trans scholars from all over the globe have contributed to knowledge production and of the specific racialized hierarchies that still determine how that knowledge is valued. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021), for example, points to the erasures of work and concepts developed by African scholars even in work that takes place within a postcolonial and decolonial frame. This is despite the fact that key thinkers such as Walter Mignolo have acknowledged their intellectual debt to African intellectuals such as Samir Amin, Kwame Nkrumah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

In this Special Issue, Vaughan et al. further argue that work by African scholars has often been sidelined to the margins of knowledge production as 'area studies', rather than being deemed central to intellectual endeavours to understand racisms and colonial power. Their article also raises important questions regarding the ways in which the decolonization of knowledge production may take place. Citing Sylvia Tamale, they remind us that '[i]t takes conscious unlearning and relearning to "shake off" the colonial filters through which we view the world' (2020: 58). While they emphasize that this active unlearning is a necessary practice for scholars in the Global North, it is also recognized to be of significance to those the Global South (Ndlovu 2018). For Vaughan et al., their attempts involve collaboration between scholars in the Global North and South (in this case with a clear majority of Global South scholars), as well as attending to local knowledge by engaging with multiple forms of narrative data and actively seeking to address coloniality within research theories and tools. Fundamental to these attempts to centre African scholars and African communities as legitimate producers of knowledge has been the practice of 'co-production' throughout the research process from initial design through to dissemination. Despite these, the question remains to what extent such practices do in fact decentre dominant epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies, and regimes of value.

These critical questions have not yet been sufficiently addressed in the emerging research on Global South racisms and racisms 'beyond colour', but which are inseparable from questions of resistance and liberation. As Smith (2021: 285) argues, 'critique is not enough'. Scholars working in this area do often point to the interconnections between theorizing race and anti-racist politics and the need to draw on the former to inform the latter (see, for example, Raghuram 2022). Yet work in this area has not yet developed fully and needs to engage more deeply with the wider literatures on decolonization as praxis. In doing so, it may draw on the knowledges produced by the Global South and other marginalized scholar-activists. In this Special Issue, the question of resistance is addressed in ways that highlight how, as argued by Aboagye (2022: 6) – whose own work examines connections shared between First Nations and African diasporic peoples in Australia and throughout the Black Pacific – 'Racialisation as the primary unit of social analysis is not enough on its own for the liberation of our minds and our spirits.' As discussed in the papers focusing on South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, the racialization of Self and Other by Black Africans constitutes a form of resistance that endangers Black lives and occurs in the absence of power to disrupt the White-Black racial hierarchy. The analyses offered are vital and important. What is powerful, however, in Aboagye's work is an attempt to build an indigenist sociological theory that is grounded in *healing* settler-colonial constructions of racial hierarchies of Blackness, recognizing that these do not mirror Black ontological experiences, and aiming to attend to the entangled liberations of Black and Indigenous people globally.

From this perspective, it is apt that this Special Issue ends by focusing on anti-racist mobilizations as a response to racialization in the article by Baumann and Denardi. In the context of Covid-19, it is perhaps unsurprising that the authors explore 'digital anti-racism' as a tool for anti-racist work. Siddiqi and Ashraf likewise show how the voices and resistance of Bangladeshi garment workers have been most visible online, in Facebook pages set up since the pandemic. In both articles, but particularly the former, the authors seek to restore the agency of those who are subject to racialization by identifying emerging moments of resistance that have the potential to enact social and political transformations. However, in Baumann and Denardi's article, the scale and impact of that resistance, and its participation by and benefits to different groups of Chinese people in Argentina, in terms, for example, of citizenship status, gender, generation and position in the labour market, need to be pinpointed more clearly. This is particularly important in the context of their focus on digital activism, which raises questions about which groups are able to use social media and in communication with whom, given the restrictions of language, age and the economic means to name but a few. This is necessary to avoid a celebratory discourse that both understates the gravity of the challenges faced by different sections of these communities and overstates the power of digital anti-racist activism. On their own, the examples given of the media visibility granted to several individual second-generation Chinese immigrants provides insufficient evidence that the 'institutional change at the macro-level' that the authors hope for is being effected. As Lan, Sier and Camenisch rightly point out, the role of digital media is highly contradictory. Scholarship in this area widely points to the ways in which, in digital spaces, modes of anti-racist resistance can be, to cite Sutherland (2017: 33) 'appropriated to reinforce systems of white supremacist power and racial inequality, re-inscribing structural and systemic racism'.

A final note of consideration arises in relation to the question that Vaughan et al. raise about the dissemination of research and the ways in which scholars need to remain accountable to 'the communities of knowers from which these knowledges emerge' (Aboagye 2022: 13). In this case, one might pause to consider the ways in which we as scholars might be complicit in reproducing and recirculating racialized and racist media imagery as we critique it in our texts, and in doing so, contribute to the emotional distress experienced by the communities we seek to serve. This is part of a broader point with regard to reflexivity on the part of researchers, and the necessary unlearning and relearning to shake off not only the colonial filters through which we view the world, but also those practices through which we do research and share knowledge. Scholarship on racism and racialization needs to be linked to imagining alternative models of thinking, epistemic freedom (Mbembe 2016) and, above all, emancipatory action in order to move us towards social justice.

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Note on the Author

DIANA YEH is Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Culture and the Creative Industries at City, University of London. Her project, 'Responding to COVID-19 Anti-Asian Racial Violence through Community Care, Solidarity and Resistance' (**https://www.eseahub.co.uk/**), is funded by Resourcing Racial Justice and the SASS HEI Fund. Recent articles: 'Becoming "British East Asian and Southeast Asian": Anti-racism, Chineseness, and Political Love in the Creative and Cultural Industries' (2021) and 'COVID-19, Anti-Asian Racial Violence and The Borders of Chineseness' (2020).
Email: **diana.yeh@city.ac.uk**