



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### Caring subjects

**Citation for published version:**

Bassel, L & Emejulu, A 2017, 'Caring subjects: Migrant women and the third sector in Scotland and England', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 41, pp. 36-54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1334930>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1080/01419870.2017.1334930](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1334930)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Ethnic and Racial Studies

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* on 20/6/2017, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01419870.2017.1334930>.

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



## Caring Subjects: Migrant Women and the Third Sector in England and Scotland

### Abstract

We situate racialised migrant mothers as political actors in the landscape of austerity in England and Scotland. We explore the possibilities of a politics around caring work. We ask: what 'caring subjects' are possible, under austerity? A 'politics of care' can challenge the dichotomy between private caring and public citizenship practices (Erel 2011). However, we argue that the shift from a 'culture of care' to a 'culture of cuts' poses significant challenges to this politics in third sector spaces, particularly when processes of racialization are brought to the fore. We move beyond 'reductionist economism' to explore how the current economic crisis is also one of social relations. The re-privatization of caring and reproductive work generates new forms of subjectivity and social reproduction (Hajek and Opratko 2015). Within the supposed 'monolith' of neoliberalism, a multiplicity of subjectivities are engendered which open some spaces for resistance and subversion.

**Keywords:** migrant women, austerity, racialisation, England, Scotland

### Introduction

In this article, we situate racialised migrant mothers as political actors in the landscape of austerity in England and Scotland. We explore the possibilities of a politics articulated and enacted by migrant women and their advocates around caring work. We ask: what 'caring subjects' are possible, under austerity? A 'politics of care' has the potential to challenge the dichotomy between private caring and public citizenship practices (Erel 2011). However, we argue that the shift from a 'culture of care' to a 'culture of cuts' poses significant challenges to this politics in third sector spaces, particularly when processes of racialization are brought to the fore. We move beyond 'reductionist economism' to explore how the current economic crisis is also a crisis of social relations, in which the re-privatization of caring and reproductive work generates new forms of subjectivity and social reproduction (Hajek and Opratko 2015). Within the supposed 'monolith' of neoliberalism, however, on the ground a multiplicity of subjectivities are engendered which open some spaces for resistance and subversion by racialised migrant women.

In the broader landscape in which we situate racialized migrant mothers as political actors, minority groups' experiences generally do not prominently feature nor inform discussions of policy problems or solutions unless groups are interpellated in particularly racialised and gendered discussions of social problems (Phoenix and Phoenix 2012). Minority groups' persistent poverty and unemployment is typically only highlighted as a 'public issue' in the contexts of moral panics 'failed' families and state strategies (ibid 2012: 62). For stigmatised mothers in particular, experiences of poverty are privatised and are only defined as a public issue when their 'failed femininities' lead to family breakdown and public disorder (Allan and Taylor 17 January 2012).

The 'politics of care' we explore in this challenging context is developed drawing on Patricia Hill Collins' (2000a 209) groundbreaking work which demonstrates how political consciousness can emerge from Black women's everyday lived experiences and foster a distinctive political sensibility. Hill Collins identifies the ways in which motherhood – whether bloodmother, othermother or community othermother – can be invoked as a symbol of power, through which Black women express ethics of caring and personal accountability and build a different kind of community—and a different kind of politics (Hill Collins 2000a 192-3). We draw on this framework in considering the ways in which racialized migrant mothers, and their 'third sector' advocates – working in civil society organisations positioned between the state and the market that we define further below – might enact a politics of care within and around third sector spaces. We ask: what 'caring subjects' are possible under austerity and the re-privatisation of caring and reproductive work in England and Scotland for racialised migrant mothers who live, react to and resist these and other stigmatising interpellations?

We first explore the re-privatization of care and reproductive work at an individual level, and suggest that this process interacts in unpredictable ways with the political resources motherhood can provide racialised migrant women. As Ruth Lister and others have argued, an ethic of care is a contradictory political resource: care can be a citizenship practice; yet caring responsibilities can also be an obstacle to women's citizenship (Lister 2008). Here we contribute to this debate by insisting on the ways in which these processes are racialised, with dynamics that are specific to the different contexts we examine as well as sharing broad commonalities. In 'placing' migrant women as racialised citizens, we also consider the emotional toll on women involved in grassroots and third sector initiatives as they try to enact public forms of 'care' in the face of context-specific challenges.

In the context of third sector organisations, the story of 'reprivatisation' needs to be told carefully. These organisations are sites permeated by 'enterprise culture' where *both* compliant *and* resistant subjectivities are generated by and with migrant mothers. The relationship between private caring and public citizenship has changed; third sector organisations have shifted from being potential spaces of public caring and reciprocity to spaces shaped by an ethos of competitive market-driven service delivery and personalised service delivery. We characterize this as a shift from a culture of 'care' to one of 'cuts'. Migrant mothers and their third sector advocates have experienced this culture shift in two ways. First, as a hardening of the boundary between public and private, with it becoming less/impossible to do the 'emotional stuff' and enact a politics of care, particularly in a context of austerity *and* harsh anti-migrant public sentiment, political discourse and law.

Second, this shift is experienced as a reconfiguration of the relationship between public and private, where 'public' caring is increasingly only possible when interpellated as enterprising carers, bringing its own risks and problems that reinforce as well as subvert the contours of migrant mothers' 'caring' citizenship. In this article we pose the following questions: who enterprises and at what cost? With what support? On whose terms?

We will now turn to discuss our cases—England and Scotland under austerity—and our methods.

### Context, Cases and Methods

Britain is undergoing the most extensive reduction and restructuring of its welfare state since the Second World War (Yeates, Haux et al. 2011); (Taylor-Gooby and Stoeker 2010); (Taylor-Gooby 2011);(Whitely, Clarke et al. 2014). During the five-year Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government from 2010 to 2015, £80 billion spending cuts were announced that included £18 billion reduction in welfare spending (Brewer and Browne 2011 4). The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government presided over a 27% cut to local government—the key mechanism for delivery of public services—and a 68% cut to the social housing budget (Taylor-Gooby 2011 4). These spending cuts are ‘larger than any retrenchment since the 1920s’ (ibid: 4). With the unexpected Conservative victory at the polls in May 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, have announced a further £12 billion reduction in social welfare spending.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) Government at Holyrood opposes the Westminster austerity programme and has an official policy of mitigating its impact in Scotland through a combination of its Social Wage and the full mitigation of the so called ‘bedroom tax’ (Scottish Government 2015). Under current devolution settlement, however, the Scottish Government is obliged to implement these dramatic spending cuts. Despite immigration and some areas of fiscal policy being powers reserved to Westminster, devolution appears to have opened up alternative political spaces whereby the governing SNP is distinctive for advancing pro-migrant and anti-austerity positions. The SNP platform specifically distances itself from Westminster austerity measures through its budget proposals, by staggering and mitigation of Westminster-driven austerity policies and – at the time our fieldwork was conducted – in its plans for an independent Scotland.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the articulation and practices of a politics of care might be possible in a seemingly anti-austerity and pro-migrant Scotland.

In England, a longstanding Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) third sector might arguably enable a politics of care and defend third sector spaces for and with migrant mothers. Yet under the Coalition government – at the time of our fieldwork – harsh austerity measures were being introduced. These measures, which disproportionately impact on minority groups (Sandhu 2013), have changed the nature of services provided but also the ethos of organisations—the cultural shift from care to cuts that we refer to in our analysis. Furthermore, while the BME third sector in England has played a key role in championing issues relating to BME groups, filling in or bridging of gaps left by public services and even acting as a potential site of resistance (Speaker, Knowledge Exchange Event 2013) such spaces also tend to be dominated by men (Discussion, Knowledge Exchange Event 2013).<sup>2</sup>

London, where a good part of the England-based research was conducted, was the most ethnically diverse area across England and Wales according to the 2011 Census. In contrast, Scotland’s BME population is much smaller but concentrated in the largest cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow, where this research was conducted. As our discussion will show, this difference in size and visibility was significant for some women in Scotland who participated

---

<sup>1</sup> Of course, a close reading of the SNP’s proposals for an independent Scotland demonstrate that the Party did not rule out austerity—however, these debates are beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Part of our research design involves knowledge exchange events during the project to elicit feedback on emerging findings from key actors on the ground. Full details to be provided in the de-anonymised version of the text.

in our study. Our focus is on narratives and experiences as situated within these two cases, not on comparing them directly and systematically or making broader claims about 'migrant women's experiences in England v. Scotland'.

The site explored in this article is the so-called 'third sector', a term that is notoriously difficult to define (see, for example, (Martens 2002); (Vakil 1997)). In this study, we define it as the collection of civil society organisations positioned between, and strongly influenced by, both the state and the market. We have selected third sector organisations that are traditional social welfare service providers; hybrid organisations combining advocacy and campaigning with service provision; organisations offering so-called 'militant provision' in the form of crisis relief and political organising for destitute and/or undocumented migrants; and, finally, campaigning and policy advocacy organisations that are not involved in service provision and are closer to social movements in that they situate their activity at the edge of social service provision and also as part of 'a network of informal interactions' (Diani 1992 8). We intentionally have not made gender equality/feminist organisations the focus of our sample because the bulk of current research about women's grassroots activism focuses on explicitly feminist organizing ((Sudbury 1998 ; Dominelli 2006)(Author 2 2011) (Annesley 2012)) and we feel that the responsibility for recognizing and advancing the social justice claims of and with migrant women does not only rest on feminist shoulders.

From September 2011 to May 2014, we conducted 27 semi-structured interviews and focus groups in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, Coventry, London, Wales<sup>3</sup> (one participant) with: minority<sup>4</sup> and migrant women activists; directors, policy officers and development workers in anti-poverty, housing, migrant rights third sector organisations; and civil servants and local government officials with briefs for the third sector and/or equalities. Additional material was collected from a separate research project<sup>5</sup> and three knowledge exchange events.<sup>6</sup>

Our sample includes the following: women who self-identify as 'Black', a label they use politically; women who self-identify as 'refugee' or 'migrant' or who work for or with organisations with names including these terms; women who, in the course of interviews, refer to their own identity or background e.g. 'my family is from...'. The sample also comprises self-identified advocates of specific groups of women, e.g. asylum seekers, migrants. These advocates were sometimes part of the white mainstream, sometimes self-identified minority women or women who situated themselves as 'advocates' though also belonging to a minority group they were discussing. Some participants identified as minority women who, while minoritised along some axes, were advantaged along others, e.g. social class and education. In some cases this was specifically identified as a resource on the basis of which they could advocate on behalf of other racialised women. Others identified as migrants who were not racialised, therefore could 'pass' into the white mainstream in contrast to those on whose behalf they advocate, a difference they noted.

---

<sup>3</sup> City information has not been included in Table 1 providing details about participants in order to preserve anonymity.

<sup>4</sup> By 'minority women' we refer to women who experience the effects of processes of racialisation, class and gender domination as well as other sources of inequality, particularly hierarchies of legal status. The term 'minority women' implies a process in which women at these intersections are 'minoritised' and, in turn, forge their own political identities and strategies drawing on the resources these social locations offer.

<sup>5</sup> Details to be provided in final version.

<sup>6</sup> Details to be provided in final version.

We have identified the social location of participants cited to the extent that this does not compromise their anonymity in Table 1. We fully acknowledge the limitations of using the terms ‘minority’ or ‘Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)’ in relation to the women in our study. As North Americans working in Britain, we prefer the term ‘women of colour’ but understand that this label is seen by some as a problematic importation of North American race politics. We do not seek to impose this identity on the participants in our study so we have opted to use the labels they use to describe themselves.

### **Section 1: Reprivatised mothers and the politics of care**

In this section we explore the re-privatization of care and reproductive work at an individual level, and suggest that this process interacts in unpredictable ways with the political resources motherhood can provide racialised migrant women. While a politics of care is not foreclosed, this interaction does not necessarily lead to outcomes that challenge the dichotomy between private caring and public citizenship – particularly because of the racialisation of processes of claiming public space as well as their gendered dimensions - and places a tremendous toll on women involved in grassroots and third sector initiatives that is experienced in different ways across our contexts as a challenge to identity and values.

Under austerity the extent to which racialised migrant mothers can even occupy public space, and be mothers in public (Baraitser 2009) is increasingly constrained, with mothers describing ways in which they were *de facto* physically confined to domestic spaces. Public services, particularly childcare, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes (see also (Lonergan 2015 138)) and sports activities for children, had been the key way in which women were able to participate in everyday life. Cuts to these services, particularly at the local level, may further isolate women who are already in a precarious social and economic position. Lack of money for bus fare constrained some participants’ physical mobility, in conjunction with lack of income to participate in leisure activities with children and, for those working outside of the home, lack of time due to increased pressure to work longer hours, straining relationships of care within families and generating new emotional challenges. As described by a Scotland-based participant:

I feel the climate is...affecting us emotionally...We’re not able to do anything with the kids as much as we want to do. We have to make sure their main priority are given. But every child’s got individual need but every child needs family time and with family time you need certain things...Even to go on holiday. <sup>7</sup>

Childcare was universally identified by our participants as a major obstacle, specifically in preventing their access to ESOL classes and as a key factor in gendered choices over whether to go back to work. While these considerations are not new they deeply affect migrant women. With reduced household budgets, access to English language training and participants’ awareness of fragile/underpaid possibilities for women in the racialised labour market, the current climate of cuts was affecting how childcare expenses factored into the decision to go back to work.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> This material is drawn from the related research project mentioned above. Full references to be provided in final version.

<sup>8</sup> Full reference to report we co-authored with other colleagues to be provided in final version.

Many of these effects of austerity have been documented in broader studies, even noting the disproportionate impact on lone mothers (Lonergan 2015). However, these studies rarely distinguish the disproportionate impacts on racialised women for whom, as our own participants insisted, nothing is 'new' here but instead a deepening of longstanding inequalities that are invisible in 'the numbers'. Making these connections visible in public debate was a political stance for some racialised women:

People are gonna die...if you're too scared to...telephone Gateway [a legal aid agency] about a legal issue, if you're having to decide whether you're gonna pay the rent because your benefit's now capped, especially if you've got three or more children, whether you put food on the table for your kids. If you're suffering from some mental health illness...you're not gonna figure this out are you? And that's when I realised how unjust the whole thing is... you can't separate this, all this stuff from the way we're [migrants] conceived in society. And if you look at things like race impacting the West Midlands...It's all interrelated (Participant 1)

In response to the asymmetrical impacts of austerity and the unjust immigration system that the participants in our study repeatedly identified, migrant mothers and their daughters articulate and enact a politics of care and seek to build new forms of community, drawing explicitly on motherhood as a source of resistance to austerity, racism and xenophobia:

I said on principle I don't agree with you anyway but on principle I am the mother of a black boy, imagine if I'd told my son I didn't do certain things in my life as he grows up because white people, groups of white people told me I wasn't ready to do this, so I just didn't do them...in terms of being a mother yeah, what I do I've always done for my son yeah and his generation...I have to fight discrimination the way my mother in this country coming from the Caribbean was told she was a monkey, did she live in the jungle, did she have a tail, yeah, that's quite a lot of discrimination (Participant 3)

Mothers' experiences and their involvement of their daughters ensured political consciousness spanning several decades:

So actually my kind of awareness of this, my mother is from a Caribbean island, she was a teacher and she was a community activist in the 80s, which was when I was becoming politically aware, that's the decade of my upbringing. And she ran anti-racism courses so that's where I knew about the different discriminations and how it impacts and I've been able to then recognise it when I see it in workplaces or in groups I've been involved in later (Participant 4)

Yet motherhood and caring do not always suffice as a catalyst for activism and a distinctive political sensibility under austerity which, we suggest, has toxic effects on politics of care. As Janet Newman argues of the UK context, 'the politics of austerity...offers an inhospitable climate for progressive feminist projects' (Newman 2013 217). It is increasingly difficult for activists to find time or resources for 'creative political work' because 'cuts in public and welfare services are intensifying the time pressures on women, making it more difficult to

reconcile care work, paid employment, casual work, study, voluntary or charitable contributions and political activity' (Ibid: 217). We add to this analysis a focus on the ways in which processes of racialisation in England and Scotland further intensify these challenges and create additional obstacles.

Our participants described the path from motherhood to a politics of care as incredibly difficult. As our only Wales-based participant articulated this the public politics of caring, particularly for racialised asylum seeker women for whom she feels a personal responsibility because of her own experience, was in direct competition with family caring responsibilities:

I have a very young family. And that [third sector] organisation is taking too much of my time... Yeah despite our passion, despite our goodwill, we can't keep on doing it. I will not keep on doing it...I have a young family. I have to take care of them. I have my studies, I have to study. One day I will just say, 'you know what, I've tried...I can't keep on doing it'. So hopefully it won't come to that...I can't spend that time with my kids. I can't spend that time sleeping. I can't spend that time going to the cinema because I was...once upon a time I was [in] that situation [asylum seeker]. And some people listen to me when I was crying. I want to do the same. It's taking [its toll] on my life (Participant 5)

Others observed how a regime of cuts in the third sector shrank the available time and space for racialised women to consider and enact a politics of care in their families and their organisations. For one participant in England mindsets are affected, people 'don't have life' and hardly see their children because they are 'just doing so much...It's scary' (Participant 2b).

In England the struggles that our participants face are not only 'as women' in the context of cuts to third sector organisations and the reprivatisation of care but also as racialised migrant women who simultaneously contend with the disproportionate impact of austerity at the individual level and hardening public opinion, political discourse and immigration law that create further tension and division within communities. These challenges are identified in all sites of our England-based research, and observed directly in London by a migrant woman in her work:

[In this] session that I had in Brent with a group of parents was this mother who was also British, born British, raised British, had three children, she worked for 17 years in this country then she had an illness that stopped her working. Now she's been affected by the benefit cap, she's being affected by the changes that welfare reform, but she's not saying OK we are in recession, there is crisis, we have to pay this and the Government has made these changes, but she's saying I am born and raised British, why should I be affected by something that foreigners caused? So somehow the blame for all these changes that are happening at the moment is pointed towards migrants and that will increase racism, discrimination, specifically against migrant families...that kind of hostility is dangerous.  
(Participant 6)



For some of our Scotland-based participants, these challenges crystallised around the fear of being singled out and targeted for harassment since the Black and minority ethnic communities in Glasgow and Edinburgh are much smaller than those in London:

Women in the ethnic minority, there is a fear and worry about our children but also the fear, like I said, it affects different people differently. Some people are going to be able to express themselves more angrily or rowdily and that creates more fear so the others are going to curl away because times are hard... it becomes a life of caution rather than jumping onto taking opportunities (Focus Group 1).

Racialised migrant mothers clearly draw on motherhood and experiences of racism as a resource but also, as racialised migrant mothers, may abstain from public politics of care. The unpredictable nature of the interaction of reprivatised care, motherhood *and* processes of racialisation in an increasingly anti-migrant environment does not foreclose a politics of care. However, this interaction does not necessarily lead to outcomes that challenge the public-private dichotomy in the form of a viable politics of care with and by racialised migrant mothers, not least because of the emotional toll exacted on women involved in grassroots and third sector initiatives.

In Scotland, given the relative isolation and exclusion of minority ethnic groups combined with the new (only partly mitigated) austerity regime, some groups are choosing not to engage in a public politics of care and focus instead on working for the benefit of the family and kinship networks. In this case activities such as volunteering are used as an employment strategy rather than a form of public care and engagement:

We are here to earn money and to make lives for ourselves, activism is not really for a minority community and I think that's a sort of a prevalent environment in Edinburgh because we are quite small, I think in London you will find differences or may be in Glasgow because it's much bigger so there's a greater chance to find an activist. Personally I don't think that anybody who works in [organization] would do it [volunteer] for free, they do it because they get a job...We are still trying to fit in...if we wanted to change the world we would have stayed where we were...from the women we see, very few of them will take active steps to make things better collectively (Participant 7).

Despite pro-migrant, pro-multiculturalist SNP rhetoric during the independence referendum, some participants expressed doubts about the fate of racialised communities in an independent Scotland and this appeared to prevent them from taking part in public politics: 'I can't see ethnic minorities at George Square [the main public space for protest rallies in Glasgow] talking about cuts...we are even fearing the Scotland independence, some of people are, we are really fearing it, we don't know what will happen to us...[it's] better to keep quiet' (Focus Group 1). A consistent theme in the Scottish data was minority ethnic and migrant women feeling excluded and isolated from the broader polity, despite this anti-austerity and pro-migrant nationalist rhetoric. Instead, as racialised migrant women, they were in fact positioned outside of an ostensibly inclusive national project and its protest culture which speaks *for* rather than *with* them, making it difficult for them to build coalitions with other activists and more broadly in Scottish society.

We will now turn to examine how the changing nature of the third sector in Scotland and England is impacting on migrant mothers' politics of care.

## **Section 2: Third sector: Shifts from a 'Culture of care' to 'culture of cuts'**

The impacts of budget cuts on the not-for-profit sector are increasingly well-documented (Independence Panel 2013), but few studies consider the intersectional effects of austerity on organisations' programmes and advocacy (Authors 1 & 2 2014, 2015) and for the politics of care enacted by racialized migrant women and their advocates. In the UK, the rise of 'enterprise'<sup>9</sup> as a dominant ideological frame for action has continued apace during the crisis, generating dilemmas for third sector organisations working in the anti-poverty, housing and migration sectors (Authors 1 & 2 2013). Principles of competition, the accumulation of assets and the commodification of services and products have been imposed onto individual organisations by the local or national state. The ethos of enterprise has fundamentally shifted relationships between state, market and civil society. These shifts generate a difficult context for third sector organisations as, with the rise of privatization of social welfare in the wake of austerity, they must either become 'any willing provider' or, often, face extinction. The politics of care by and with migrant mothers is, we argue, compromised as a result because of the ways these processes combine with the processes of racialisation that our work highlights. While not experienced uniformly, participants identified a change in the nature of the relationship between private caring and public caring practice that we characterise as a hardening of the boundary between the two, making it less/im-possible for third sector workers to translate an ethic of (private) care into (public) caring work within third sector organisations working with and for racialised migrant women that, in one woman's view, can no longer 'do the emotional stuff'.

This minority ethnic woman in Scotland demonstrated the ways in which it was harder to provide 'extra' services that had previously enabled women and children, who had experienced domestic violence, to participate in a range of activities, e.g. providing taxis so women and children can attend social activities and access services (Participant 7). She gave a specific example describing her role, and that of her organization, as that of 'surrogate mother':

I'm thinking of a woman who has only just arrived yesterday and she has three children, she left her house with nothing, no clothes, cannot even read a word of English, has been locked up in a house for four years, and now is in temporary accommodation somewhere in Edinburgh... If it was a white woman, a lot of the things we wouldn't need to do. We wouldn't need to show her how to get on a bus, we would tell her no. 5 even if she is, can't read numbers, she should be able to speak to somebody randomly and ask for help. She will not have fears of 'is this person going to be racist to me, or are they not going to understand me'. This

---

<sup>9</sup> We define enterprise as encompassing the values of 'individualism, personal achievement...and the assumption of personal responsibility' (Diochon and Andersons 2011 96). Entrepreneurship is the independent actions of self-interested individuals for profit making activities (Anderson and Smith 2007). Enterprise and entrepreneurship are oftentimes used as synonyms for innovation, risk-taking and dynamism—the market-derived meanings for these terms have been obscured.

woman has no social network so in between all of this we are sort of becoming surrogate mothers to her, who is going to do that?

Policymakers are no longer willing to grant 'specialist' funding which threatens the survival of the organisation and its effectiveness in providing intensive support, curtailing this role of 'surrogate mothers ... you know teaching them what it means to be free as well as what it means to live here [in Scotland]... the emotional stuff'. Her view is that the 'creative' projects are less of a priority:

We need to be really strong doing the things that we already do rather than trying to be creative... Yes there is a need for emotional interventions but the environment that we are in I think government funders will want you to be as practical as possible, and I think this is how we've always looked at it as well, we need to be really strong and consolidate our funding.

It is striking that what we would easily include as a vital part of a 'politics of care'— emotional support and interventions—becomes 'creative', meaning superfluous, work as opposed to the 'real issue' of housing. This is not to criticize the participant but to reflect on the cultural shifts that change third sector workers' understanding of their work and how it affects the migrant women they work with, as well as their own professional identities. What is significant is how little weight *can* be given to their role as 'surrogate mothers' undertaking emotional labour as, for and with racialised migrant women.

This shift was by no means experienced uniformly across all participants and organisations. Migrant mothers' social and political potential to express an ethics of caring and personal accountability and build solidarity and community (Hill Collins 2000a 192-3) rather than focus on their victimization, were recognized and promoted by other organisations and individuals.

The same minority ethnic woman in Scotland quoted above identifies a chilling effect on how some racialised women workers think about the potential of their organisation and their own identity:

It also has an impact on the quality of not just the service that we provide but also on the way we look at ourselves as workers...because if you've worked in an organisation like XXX and you try and go and work in a mainstream organisation they don't necessarily see your skills as transferable because actually your expertise is with black minority ethnic women, what do you know about white women, so even for those of us who work there, we experience similar levels of discrimination and some of it is internalising, we assume as well that this is how the world is going to think of us because that is how they think of the women we work with anyway, so why are we so different (Participant 7)

Similarly to the individual level, we see that within third sector organisations the boundary between public and private has hardened making it difficult for workers to translate 'private' care to 'public' politics of care due to intertwined processes of erosion of the welfare state and racialisation. However, through the experiences of those working in the third sector,

we see an added dimension—the development of a neoliberal subjectivity. In this case, these processes are consciously experienced. This woman knows she is internalising intertwined processes of racialisation and (cultural and material) shifts in the third sector. She clearly articulates the challenge to her personal and professional values and identity and the precarity of her situation where her professional status and legitimacy are under threat because of racialising, neoliberal imperatives. Her responses demonstrate the simultaneity of hardening borders from ‘private’ to ‘public’ when trying to ‘care’ publicly, and racialising neoliberal encroachment in the opposite direction.

### Section 3: A Reconfigured Relationship

Our boundary imagery needs further elaboration when we consider the complex functioning of ‘enterprise culture’ within third sector organisations. Here we question the ‘monolithic’ portrayal of neoliberalism ‘as a singular force folding feminism and other movements into a new, undifferentiated hegemonic form’ (Newman 2013: 214) and, like Janet Newman, identify ambiguities. We argue that these ambiguities signal a different kind of movement across the border between ‘private’ caring and ‘public’ politics of care, with specifically racialized dimensions for migrant women in third sector spaces.

Through the call to ‘social enterprise’<sup>10</sup> – a concept and practice which emerged within the European third sector in the 1990s and has always been deeply connected to it (Defourny, Hulgård et al. 2014) – racialized migrant mothers are increasingly interpellated as *enterprising agents* of care, at the same time as being interpellated as social problems (Phoenix and Phoenix 2012), ‘failed mothers’ (Allen and Taylor 2012) and victims of their communities (Authors 1&2). Initiatives identified in the course of our study included highly gendered activities such as community cafes, crèches and sewing groups which, as participants argue, were to serve as sources of activity, employment and income for individual women but also organisational survival for third sector organisations. We argue that social enterprise reconfigures this relationship between public and private, where ‘public’ caring is possible for racialised migrant women when interpellated as enterprising carers. This interpellation certainly brings its own risks and problems, reinforcing the inequalities of race, class and gender inherent to ‘enterprise culture’, and which echo concerns expressed about ‘homeworking’ in the 1980s (Allen and Wolkowitz 1986). But it also engenders a multiple subjectivities, some of which are resistant and/or subversive.

This highly contested terrain was identified as a space of paradox marked by (sometimes simultaneous) experiences of coercion, pragmatic acceptance, and (sometimes subversive) endorsement, where a politics of care was either doomed, unlikely or form of subversion.

The experience of coercion was best expressed by one participant as ‘it’s not like the light bulb’s gone on and thought this is a great idea, it’s more a case of do it or else you fail’ (Participant 9). While migrant women might perceive social enterprise as ‘an option for them...because they can’t find work that fits in with their...childcare responsibilities, their everyday responsibilities’ advocates questioned their own stance asking ‘is it okay for us to

---

<sup>10</sup> The concept of social enterprise, i.e. business solutions to social problems, has gone hand in hand with neoliberal policies taking hold in Britain since the 1990s. This is not a new phenomenon (Kamat 2004 ; Evans, Richmond et al. 2005 ; Choudry and Kapoor 2013).

say, well, yeah, okay, start up your own business where you might...actually end up working, like, 24 hours a day...to try and get hardly any money' (Focus Group 2). The problem, identified in this focus group, is that these forms of enterprise centre 'around [those] who are the most exploited, and vulnerable in our society. So if you look at the experiences of most of the home working that's done...by ethnic minority women, the majority of them were home workers, traditional home workers... [doing] sewing' because they also face barriers to entering the labour market (Focus Group 2).<sup>11</sup>

In this view, social enterprise is a vehicle for reprivatizing social care with a further twist, where migrant (and minority) women must in turn commodify their labour as key agents of social reproduction. These participants ask: who enterprises? At what cost and on whose terms?

Some resistance to enterprise was more pragmatic, with participants asking: with what support? In practical terms, how can would-be migrant mother entrepreneurs make social enterprise work? Here social enterprise was seen as an unrealistic 'perfect dream', while in reality there is a lack of funding to enable migrant women's success. Lack of support was identified in terms of confidence building, IT skills, language barriers, business start-up skills, setting up one's own business because 'it doesn't happen by osmosis, you have to have the funding to enable you to train and support those women on their way' (Participant 9). The desire to learn the language, to build confidence, to work, was only too present, particularly as mothers who 'want to make their lives better and...a better future for their children as well...a lot of women we see they're so far removed from actually being able to set up their own business' (Participant 9). Migrant women who may lack language skills, familiarity with the British business culture and economic and cultural capital. This pragmatic response focuses on migrant mothers' deficits, defined in enterprising terms, rather than social and political transformative potential. The language and lens of enterprise are often employed by advocates themselves as a necessity in working with migrant women, in ways that are quite different to past relationships.

Others identified social enterprise as a creative space that arguably creates a bridge between private and public caring, making it possible to care politically. Through her social enterprise, one migrant woman provides welfare rights advice to single migrant mothers in response to the dramatic cuts to legal aid (Sommerlad and Sanderson 2013) and in the landscape of xenophobia she identified earlier. Rather than simply informing them of the nature of changes to their benefits:

in all my information session I tend to put something positive and to make it balanced and although it's depressive, this is how I'm telling you how you're going to be affected...then the rest of the session would be this is what you will need to do, this is what there's options [sic], this is what the law says and often I find myself saying do not trust any government official ... it's very important to inform people for them to understand what their rights are, and whether they can join campaigns or

---

<sup>11</sup> See (Wolkowitz 1986) on the myth of autonomy, range of coercive practices, sexual division of labour, control through kinship networks that characterise 'homeworking'.

whether they can do something...and that's all to do with legal advice, it's very, very unfortunate that at the time that the legal advice work is needed (Participant 6)

In Scotland one participant identified social enterprise, specifically around food, as an opportunity to build solidarity and community that other Scotland-based participants identified as sorely lacking in their highly visible and vulnerable position in Scottish society, a key obstacle to political mobilisation and coalition-building:

The bottom line is to bring community together around food...Now we ask families helping us, we've another...women group, [a white] Scottish group to get together and develop a café. At the beginning the Scottish women were reluctant so we didn't know, but when we started talking, talking, talking and yeah now they feel quite very enthusiastic to work with us. So you know the fear of the unknown this is what is, not bringing people together so as in [organization] we say doing this around food could bring people (Focus Group 1)

However even when endorsing social enterprise some did question whether social enterprise always reflected concerns of women targeted or of organisations desperate to survive. Even while endorsing and undertaking social enterprise this woman calls the underlying power relations into question:

Why not grow something if you can grow it from grassroots? And is the objective set by the very people it's supposed to benefit? Then I think it [a social enterprise] can work. I would question whether, at the end of the day, their [third sector workers] interest is in what's the benefit of their service users or is it in the interest of the people in their organization...I'm the same. I had this idea for the cooking and the cleaning but I never spoke to any women about it. I just thought what skills have the women got, where they haven't got high literacy or numeracy levels. They haven't got high levels of qualifications. But they can bloody cook.

The interpellation as enterprising carers engenders a range of responses and subjectivities: coerced, pragmatically accepting, endorsing (because of the belief that social enterprise can be a subversive, creative feminist space, a place to build community across segregated communities, experience political efficacy in a public sphere where otherwise racialised women are interpellated as victims or social problems). While 'enterprise' is an inescapable frame for action regardless of the various organisational or individual positions that are adopted, racialised migrant women as enterprising agents of care are also subversive, even within their endorsement. This range of subjectivities and responses challenges a 'monolithic' reading of neoliberal *and* racialising processes as absolute obstacles to a politics of care for racialised migrant women in and around third sector spaces.

## Conclusion

The path from private caring to a public 'politics of care' is increasingly difficult for participants in our study because of the unpredictable ways in which the re-privatization of care and reproductive work interacts with the political resources motherhood can provide,

which are inextricable from context-specific processes of racialisation. The increasingly neoliberal third sector workplace encroaches on fragile family life and thwarts attempts to act according to political values to build new forms of community. Additionally, unprecedented austerity measures and anti-migrant public sentiment, political discourse and repressive law hamper individual strategies for a politics of care. Activities such as volunteering do not necessarily play a political role but are part of a broader survival strategy particularly for Scotland-based participants who also identify fear of independence and lack of solidarity in segregated communities as obstacles to individual and community-driven public action. Within third sector organisations, the boundary between public and private has hardened making it difficult for workers to translate ‘private’ care to ‘public’ politics of care due to intertwined processes of erosion of the welfare state and racialisation. Yet when interpellated as enterprising carers, the range of subjectivities and responses challenges a ‘monolithic’ reading of neoliberal *and* racialising processes as absolute obstacles to a politics of care by and with racialised migrant mothers in and around third sector spaces.

**Table 1: Participants cited**

	Location <sup>12</sup>	Professional Role	Social Location/Self identification
Participant 1	England	Consultant, social entrepreneur	BME woman
Participant 2a (interviewed together with Participant 2b)	England	Co-chair of women’s organisation	Black woman, minority ethnic woman
Participant 2b - interviewed together with Participant 2a)	England	Social entrepreneur, co-chair of women’s organisation	British Asian woman
Participant 3	England	Activist	Black woman “When I say Black throughout this I’m talking in a political sense, I’m talking about the visible ethnic minority women when I say Black’
Participant 4	England	Development officer in legal organisation	Black British
Participant 5	Wales	Founded women’s organisation	African woman
Participant 6	England	Director of social enterprise	Refugee woman
Participant 7	Scotland	Development worker for a minority women-led organisation	Minority ethnic woman
Participant 8	England	Head of migrant advocacy organisation	White migrant woman ‘I can pretend, I can change my name and I can put on a posh English accent and I’ll be fine, I can assimilate if it comes to that in terms of my

<sup>12</sup> City information has been removed to preserve anonymity.

			survival, but there are people who can't because they look different'
Participant 9	England	Leader of women's organisation	White British woman
Focus Group 1	Scotland	Organised through an anti-poverty organisation	7 migrant women activists
Focus Group 2	England	NGO workers	4 people: British Asian man, British Asian woman, white woman, phone participant



## References

- Allen, K. and Y. Taylor (2012). "Placing Parenting, Locating Unrest: Failed Femininities, Troubled Mothers and Riotous Subjects " *Studies in the Maternal* **4**(2): <http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk>.
- Allen, S. and C. Wolkowitz (1986). "Homeworking and the Control of Women's Labour." *Feminist Review* **22**: 25-51.
- Anderson, A. R. and R. Smith (2007). "The Moral Space in Entrepreneurship: An Exploration of Ethical Imperatives and the Moral Legitimacy of Being Enterprising." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* **19**(6): 479-497.
- Annesley, C. (2012). "Campaigning against the Cuts: Gender Equality Movements in Tough Times." *The Political Quarterly* **83**(1): 19-23.
- Baraitser, L. (2009). "Mothers who make things public." *Feminist review* **93**: 8-23.
- Brewer, M. and J. Browne (2011). Cuts to welfare spending. *In Defence of Welfare. The Impact of the Spending Review*. N. Yeates, et al. Lavenham, Social Policy Association
- Choudry, A. and D. Kapoor, Eds. (2013). *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects*. London, Zed.
- Defourny, J., L. Hulgård, et al., Eds. (2014). *Social Enterprise and the Third Sector: Changing European Landscapes in a Comparative Perspective*. London, Routledge.
- Diani, M. (1992). "The Concept of a Social Movement." *The Sociological Review* **40**(10): 1-25.
- Diochon, M. and A. R. Andersons (2011). "Ambivalence and Ambiguity in Social Enterprise: Narratives and Values in Reconciling Purpose and Practices." *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* **7**(1): 93-109.
- Dominelli, L. (2006). *Women and Community Action*. Bristol, Policy Press.
- Erel, U. (2011). "Reframing migrant mothers as citizens." *Citizenship Studies* **15**(6-7): 695-709.
- Evans, B., T. Richmond, et al. (2005). "Structuring Neoliberal Governance: The Nonprofit Sector, Emerging New Modes of Control and the Marketisation of Service Delivery." *Policy and Society* **24**(1): 73-97.
- Guardian, T. (2015). 'Vast social cleansing' pushes tens of thousands of families out of London. *The Guardian*.

- Hajek, K. H. and B. Opratko (2015). "Crisis Management by Subjectivation: Toward a Feminist Neo-Gramscian Framework for the Analysis of Europe's Multiple Crisis." *Globalizations*.
- Hill Collins, P. (2000a). *Black feminist thought. Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York, Routledge.
- Independence Panel (2013). *Independence Under Threat: The Voluntary Sector in 2013*. London, The Baring Foundation: 1-48.
- Kamat, S. (2004). "The privatization of public interest: Theorizing NGO discourse in a neoliberal era." *Review of International Political Economy* **11**(1): 155-176.
- Lister, R. (2008). Inclusive Citizenship: Realising the Potential. *Citizenship between Past and Future*. E. F. Isin, P. Nyers and B. S. Turner. London, Routledge: 48-60.
- Lonergan, G. (2015). *Feminist Review Migrant women and social reproduction under austerity*(109).
- Martens, K. (2002). "Mission Impossible? Defining Nongovernmental Organisations." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations* **13**(3): 271-285.
- Mayblin, L. and A. Soteri-Proctor (2011). "The black minority ethnic third sector: a review of the literature." *Third Sector Research Centre Briefing Paper* **58**.
- Newman, J. (2013). "Spaces of Power: Feminism, Neoliberalism and Gendered Labor'." *Social Politics* **20**(2): 200-221.
- Office for National Statistics (2012). *Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales 2011*: 1-14. Accessible at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk>.
- Sandhu, K., M. Stephenson, et al. (2013). *Layers of Inequality. A Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment of the Public Spending Cuts on BAME Women in Coventry*, A Joint Report of Coventry Women's Voices, Coventry Ethnic Minority Action Partnership, Foleshill Women's Training and the Centre for Human Rights in Practice, School of Law, University of Warwick: 1-82.
- Scotland Census (2013). Release 2A – 26 September: <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/en/censusresults/bulletin2.html>.
- Scottish Government (2015). *Welfare Reform (Further Provision) (Scotland) Act 2012—Annual Report 2015*: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/2006/6720>.
- Sommerlad, H. and P. J. Sanderson (2013). "Social justice on the margins: The future of the not for profit sector as providers of legal advice in England and Wales." *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law* **35**(2).

Sudbury, J. (1998). *Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organisations and the Politics of Transformation*. London, Routledge.

Taylor-Gooby, P. (2011). "Root and Branch Restructuring to Achieve Major Cuts: The Social Policy Programme of the 2010 UK Coalition Government." *Social Policy and Administration* **46**(1): 1-22.

Taylor-Gooby, P. and G. Stoeker (2010). "The Coalition Programme: A New Vision for Britain or Politics as Usual?" *The Political Quarterly* **82**(1): 4-15.

Vakil, A. C. (1997). "Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward a Taxonomy of NGOs." *World Development* **25**(12): 2057-2070.

Whitely, P., H. D. Clarke, et al. (2014). "The Economic and Electoral Consequences of Austerity in Britain." *Parliamentary Affairs* **68**(1): 4-24.

Yeates, N., T. Haux, et al., Eds. (2011). *In Defence of Welfare. The Impact of the Spending Review*. Lavenham, Social Policy Association