

**THE POLITICS OF INTIMACY:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF ILLEGALIZED MIGRANT  
WOMEN AND THEIR UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN  
IN TEL AVIV, ISRAEL**

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## ABSTRACT

This study of migrant women and their undocumented children in Tel Aviv, Israel is based on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork spanning 2009 to 2011. It draws upon participant observation, as well as interviews and informal conversations, in order to describe and analyze the social and political patterns that emerged when migrant women from the Global South, who were employed as caregivers for the elderly through Israel's Foreign Worker Program, chose to become pregnant, give birth and settle in the city to which they migrated as so-called temporary workers. Using a public debate over the proposed deportation of 1,200 Israeli-born, but undocumented, children of migrant workers as a point of departure for this investigation, I asked how illegalized migrant women and their children were situated in political, economic and cultural terms in Tel Aviv despite the fact that they were never supposed to permanently live there. I found that far from existing on the margins of Israeli policies, laws, bureaucratic practices and social expectations, as may be assumed of people without legal status, illegalized migrant women and their undocumented children were, in fact, embedded in their very core. I use the term "politics of intimacy" to describe the daily interactions of illegalized women and their children with Israeli government offices, medical facilities, social and legal welfare institutions, employment agencies, popular media and individual citizens, arguing that intimacy is not just an interpersonal condition, but a socio-political one that encompasses the possibilities of both empowerment and exploitation. Following from Stoler's observation of the "tense and tender ties" (Stoler 2001) of colonial rule, I describe the paradoxical conditions that are generated when marginalized individuals are brought into an intimate relationship with the structures and ideologies of the place in which they live. Specifically, illegalized migrant women and their undocumented children in Tel Aviv live in states of "permanent temporariness", "visible invisibility" and "inclusive exclusion" as they come to constitute a "privileged underclass" that is simultaneously dependent on, and vulnerable to, intimate engagements with Israeli society.

## DEDICATION

For my mother, Rosie,  
whose dream to have her name in the  
Dewey Decimal System inspired my own.

And for Marilyn,  
who showed me how.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A few months into writing the thesis, I taped a small piece of paper to my desk that read, "I'm learning..." The message was meant to remind me of both the goal of the writing process, and of its continuity. Of course I have had so many teachers, both intentional and accidental, over the course of this long and challenging learning process. I'm so glad to have opportunity to offer gratitude and recognition, however modest, to the people who have taught me, and who have encouraged me to learn more.

I would first like to thank the people whose stories fill the pages of this dissertation. The men, women, girls and boys whom I met during my fieldwork in Tel Aviv taught me innumerable lessons about grace under pressure, determination, devotion and how to live fully and joyfully in the face of uncertainty. While your real names are not written here, I've tried to convey at least some of the quality of your individual spirits and struggles. I am humbled and honoured to have had the opportunity to hear about your lives and to share parts of them in this dissertation.

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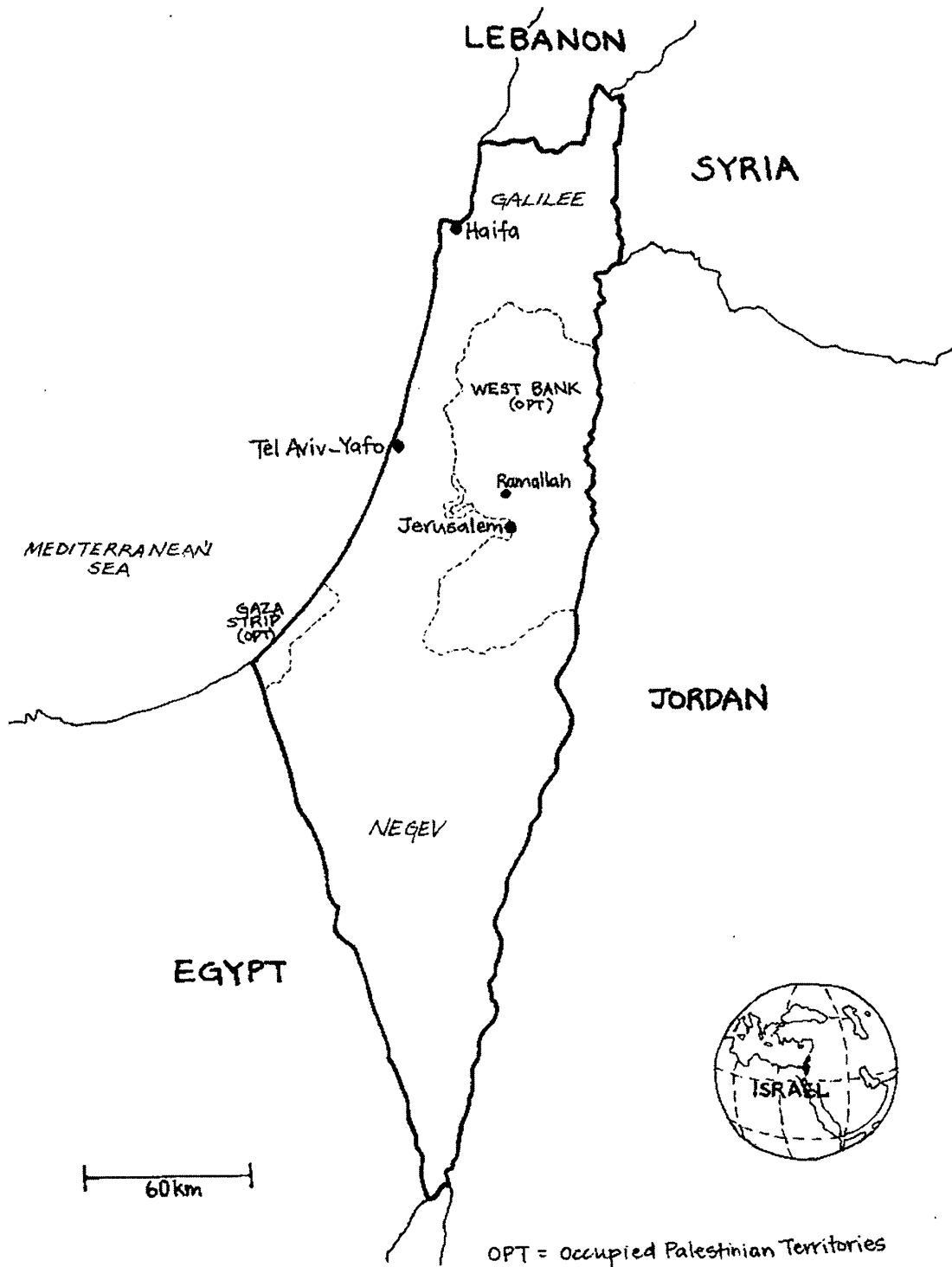
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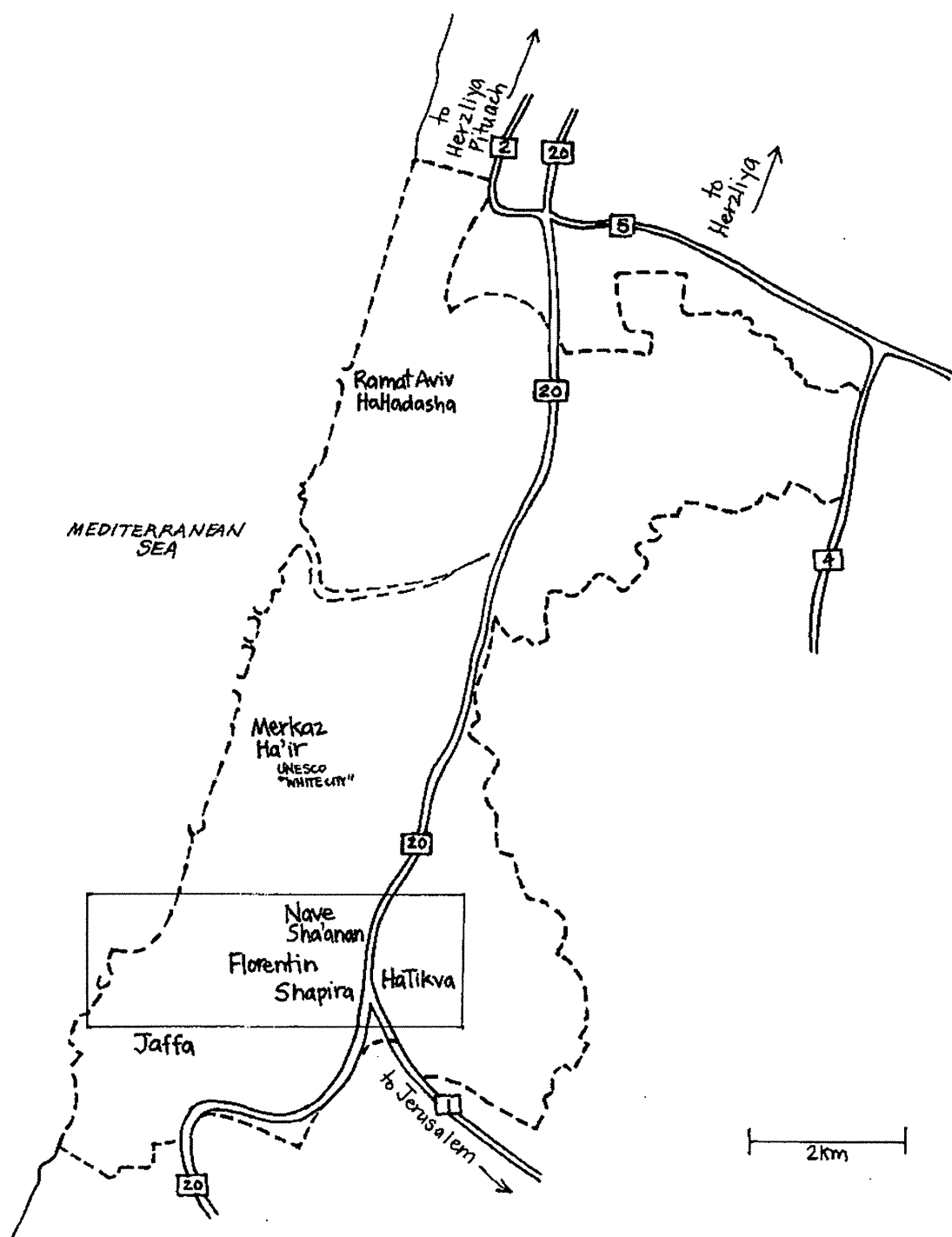
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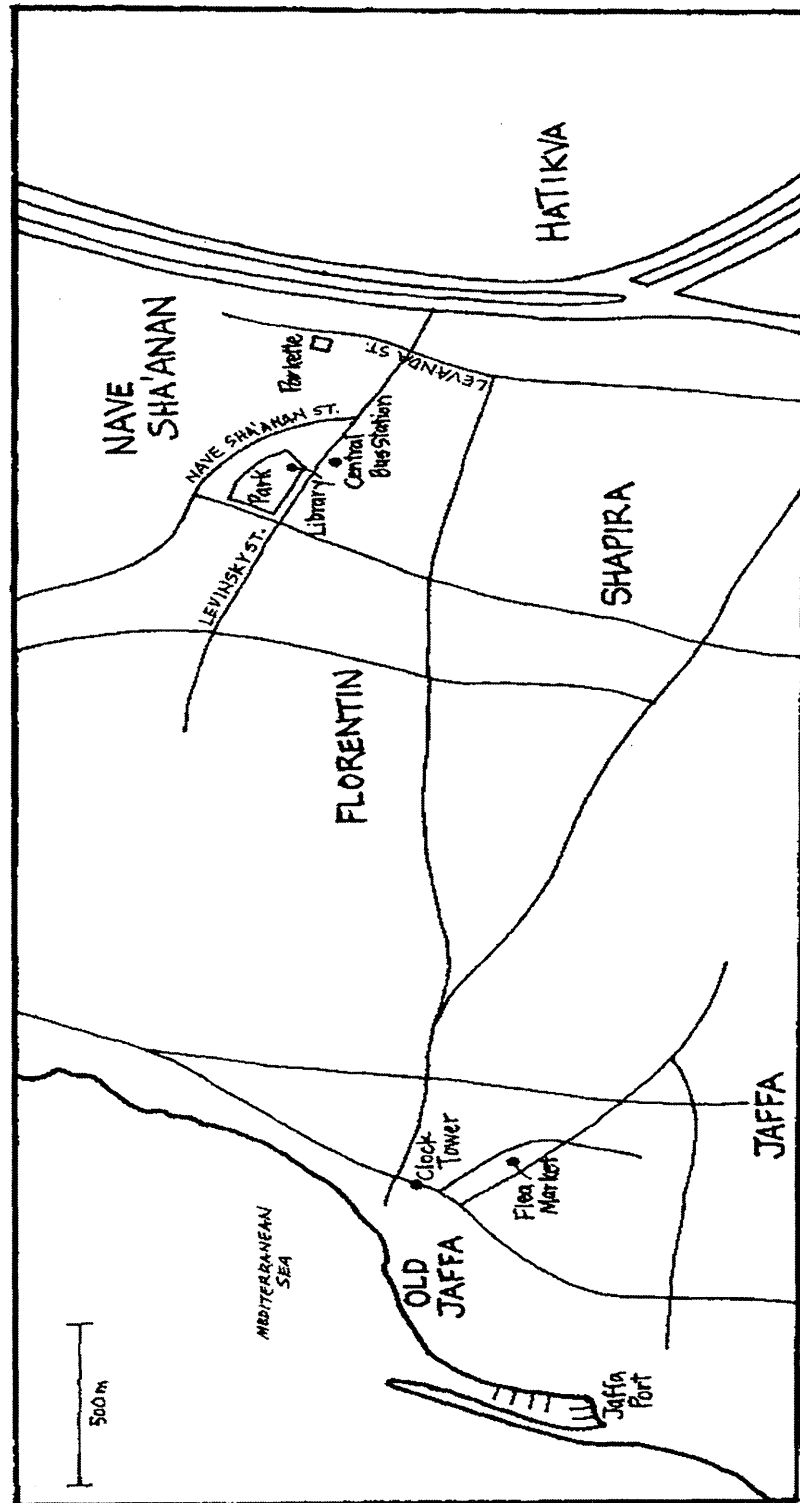
Map 1: State of Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories



Map 2: Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality 2009-2011



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## **INTRODUCTION: An illegalized birth**

There was a lull for a moment, a pause in the beeping and shuffling of the delivery room, and the nurse began to chat with me as she pulled a narrow piece of paper out of a small machine. “What’s she doing here?” The question was casual, friendly. She asked it absentmindedly as she looked over the data that documented the timing and strength of contractions. But I tensed up, and was unsure how to answer. Whatever she was “doing here”, my friend Lupe, who was in labour and lying on the hospital bed beside me, was doing it as an illegalized migrant,<sup>1</sup> without a valid visa either to live or to work in Israel. I tried for a joke, to deflect attention. “Looks like she’s about to have a baby.” The nurse smiled but kept her head down as she was taking notes. “No, not in the hospital...I mean in Israel”. She folded the paper loosely under itself and looked up at me. I translated for Lupe. In Spanish now, “She wants to know what you’re doing here”.

Another pause, and the moment had become a little awkward. The nurse had somewhere else to be and was on her way out of the room. She stopped at the door, still smiling, and waited for a response. Lupe turned away from the door, onto her side. She was drained from an eventful day and from the epidural she had received a few hours earlier. “*Visitando*” she said, her own kind of deflection. But Lupe wasn’t tense. She had told me many times before that she was used to the way it was in Israel, people being so

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<sup>1</sup> The term “illegalized migrant” refers to residents of Israel who do not have the legal right to either live or work in the country, and who may be deported to their country of origin at any time. I use this term interchangeably with the term “migrants without legal status” throughout the thesis. My choice to use these terms as opposed to others common in popular and academic literature on migration (for example, “illegal”, “undocumented” or “irregular”) will be addressed at the end of Chapter One, where I also explain the politicized nature of choosing terminology for discussions of migration.

talkative, always wanting to make conversation. The nurse nodded, showing me that she'd understood the Spanish. And then playfully, or maybe sympathetically in Hebrew, "Visiting all the way from Colombia, and so far from your husband?" I translated again, and then Lupe was smiling, even laughing a little. "Yes, he's very far away." The nurse left the room and Lupe closed her eyes, trying to get some rest before the onset of the next contraction.

This moment was ordinary, particularly forgettable for Lupe among the many other extraordinary moments that she experienced in the hours and days that followed, and in the years that had come before. Lupe was a 33-year-old woman from Villavicencio, Colombia, who had gone to Israel in 2007 to work as a caregiver for the elderly. While she had originally arrived in the country with a work visa, by the time I met Lupe in Tel Aviv in the fall of 2009, she had changed jobs several times, fractured the relationship with the employment agency that had originally recruited her, and thus lost her work visa. Lupe had been living in the city without legal status since then, working "illegally" for several months as a nanny and cleaner for a young family in the nearby suburb of Ramat Aviv. The baby's father, Lupe's ex-boyfriend, was a migrant from Peru who had overstayed his three-month tourist visa by more than a year, and had subsequently left Israel. Carlos' relationship with Lupe had ended badly. At the end, she told me, he was cheating on her, but she allowed him to stay in the apartment that they had shared because she knew that he couldn't afford to move anywhere else. He was always complaining that low-wage work had become tedious for him and that he was tired of constantly looking

over his shoulder for the deportation police. It was just a month after he left the country that Lupe discovered that she was pregnant. Carlos hadn't returned any of her phone calls or e-mails since. I met Lupe shortly after, and she asked me to accompany her, as a translator, to the pre-natal appointments she had scheduled. Eight months, many trips back and forth from laboratories and clinics, and nine hours of contractions later, Lupe and I found ourselves in Tel Aviv's largest hospital, awaiting the arrival of her first child.

And so, while it was ordinary, the moment described above is also profoundly significant. It is a part of much longer personal stories and complex relationships, and it is deeply embedded in socio-cultural expectations, bureaucratic norms, and state and government policies that have developed both locally and globally in recent years. The encounter in the hospital, rife with assumptions, misunderstandings and unspoken tensions, but also with attempts at connection and care, is the tip of an iceberg. It invokes both empirical and theoretical considerations in the increasingly converging fields of migration, labour, reproduction, citizenship and belonging.

In this dissertation I describe the experiences of Lupe and women like her in order to build an ethnographic picture that draws out and explores the significance of moments like the one in the hospital. The following general but fundamental questions serve as my points of departure for such an exploration. What happens when migrant women, employed to do various forms of domestic and reproductive labour for Israeli citizens on a temporary basis, choose to build their own homes and families in the places where they live and work? Specifically, how have migrant women and their children been situated in political, economic and cultural terms in Tel Aviv, despite the fact that they are



“unplanned persons” (Greenhalgh 2003:196) who were never supposed to permanently live or be born there? And what social patterns have emerged out of the lives that these women and their children have lived, continue to live and plan to live in the future?

Using an inductive approach to address these questions, I observed, between 2009 and 2011, what women without legalized status who lived in Tel Aviv did for work and leisure, where and with whom they lived, how they talked about and structured their families, how they sought out healthcare and social services, how they organized themselves into cultural, religious and political groups, and how they represented themselves, and were represented by others, in the local media and in public performances. I also paid attention to micro-level institutional and political processes through which these women engaged with Israeli citizens as well as with other migrants, observing the impacts that illegalized migrant women had on the neighbourhoods where they lived.

After 13 months of fieldwork, I gathered and coded my observations, located common themes in the data and uncovered the picture of social life that emerged from them. My analysis has come to rest on the following logic. Far from existing on the margins of Israeli society (as may be assumed of illegalized migrants), the lives of women without legal status in Tel Aviv, in 2009-2011, existed in an interdependent relationship with this society, and, as such, were embedded in its very core. Israeli structures and ideologies, that is, state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic/administrative practices and socio-cultural expectations, shaped the private decisions made by these women about how to conduct their everyday lives. At the same

time, the decisions and strategies of illegalized migrant women proliferated, accumulated and developed into regular ways of interacting and organizing. Illegalized migrant women's actions spoke back to, and challenged, Israeli policies, laws, practices and social expectations, causing an eruption of public debates over citizenship, migration and belonging, and altering long-established conventions in the structural and ideological make-up of Israeli society.

I call the processes that have constituted this interdependence, a "politics of intimacy", as these explain "who gets what, when and how" (Lasswell 1968) in the development of an intimate relationship between illegalized migrant women and Israeli society. In the ethnography that follows, I describe and analyze these politics, including how they operate and to what end. This dissertation can therefore be read as an attempt to elaborate upon standard definitions of "intimacy", exploring how intimacy is a set of socio-political conditions that establish and define relationships not just between individuals, but also between individuals and the structures and ideologies of the places where they live. I argue that such "intimate conditions" always contain features that, while seemingly opposed, are in fact mutually constitutive and mutually reinforcing.

By exploring and operationalizing intimacy in this way, I hope to further scholarly interest in this concept as a key link between macro and micro social processes, particularly in studies of migration and belonging. Before entering into a discussion of the analytical framework for this dissertation, however, I return to the ethnographic context and to a series of events that formed the central issue around which my research, and the lives of many illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv, revolved.

**Foreground:  
The deportation debate of 2009**

The moment at the hospital, and the subsequent birth of Lupe's daughter, Liat, occurred at a time in Israeli history when illegalized migrant women and their children were becoming particularly relevant to local and national politics and to public life in Tel Aviv. Just ten months earlier, the Israeli government had issued an order to deport 1,200 children of illegalized migrant workers. These children, like Liat, had been born in Israel to women with expired or invalid visas. Their mothers had come from villages, towns and cities all over Asia, Africa and Latin America, and had settled mostly in Israel's commercial center of Tel Aviv in order to work as caregivers and domestic workers in the homes of Israeli citizens. Because of Israel's long-established policy of *jus sanguinis* (the right of blood), the children had no automatic claim on Israeli citizenship. Regardless of their birth on Israeli territory, their lack of Jewish parentage or ancestry made them ineligible for any such status.<sup>2</sup> Some children had births that were literally undocumented (devoid of certificates, registration or, indeed, any formal proof that they existed as

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<sup>2</sup> Specific criteria for Israeli citizenship is outlined in Diagram 1, pg. 12 of this dissertation and then explained further in Chapter One, pg. 14, on "Ideals of Belonging". It is significant to mention here, however, that according to Israeli law, nationality and citizenship by birth is granted to "[P]ersons who were born in Israel to a mother or father who are Israeli citizens", "[P]ersons born outside Israel, if their father or mother holds Israeli citizenship, acquired either by birth in Israel, according to the Law of Return, by residence, or by naturalization" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website – Acquisition of Israeli Nationality, 2013). As the Law of Return specifies that Israeli citizenship is automatically available only to people who are Jewish or who have a spouse, a parent or a grandparent who is or was Jewish, it follows that children born in Israel to parents who are neither Israeli citizens nor Jews with the potential to obtain citizenship are necessarily ineligible for citizenship themselves.

residents of Israel), while others were formally registered in Israel, but as nationals of their mothers' countries of birth.

On July 30, 2009, just a few months after the announcement of the deportation order, the office of Prime Minister Netanyahu issued a formal statement suspending the order, declaring the government's intention to debate the matter. The debate was meant to last just three months, but a public outcry and formal campaigns both for and against the deportation caused the suspension to extend well beyond the original deadline. In November 2009, the deadline was extended first to the end of the school year in May 2010, and then again until August when the special governmental committee charged with researching the issue officially submitted its recommendations to the *Knesset* (Israeli Parliament). After the recommendations were accepted, establishing eligibility without guarantee for residency status for approximately eight hundred of the 1,200 children, procedures were stalled yet again while migrants and their allies scrambled to collect documents and to apply for legal status within the limited time frame that had been allotted for this process. The public debates waged on, and expanded, both during and after the submission of applications for legal status.

This very brief introduction to the deportation debate provides a picture of the local context into which Liat was born. Although the proposed deportation of 1,200 children was embedded in a sustained campaign on the part of the Israeli government to rid the country of its so-called "illegal" residents, and the responses on the part of migrants, their allies and detractors, were part of many years of struggle both for and against the criminalization of migrants, the deportation order of 2009 and the ensuing

debate regarding the children, their parents and other migrants, had an unprecedented impact on Tel Aviv residents' engagement with questions of illegalized migration. As mobilizations both for and against the deportation made their way into school events, cultural festivals, popular and news media spectacles and political demonstrations that literally filled the streets, these also became part of local discourses and long-standing tensions on matters of security, municipal resource distribution, ethnic discrimination, ideals of the national character, and the future of the state.

The deportation debate sits at the foreground of this ethnography because the deportation order was announced just one day before my entry into the field, and because subsequent events and mobilizations paved the way for me to become involved in local activism and to develop significant relationships with migrants. Beyond my personal connection to this series of moments, however, the deportation order and debate also provides an ideal point of entry into exploring Israel's past and present challenges and goals regarding migration and belonging.

### **Reading this thesis**

In the pages that follow I describe, in theoretical and ethnographic terms, what a politics of intimacy is and why it is relevant to studies of migration. To do this, I outline the social and political patterns and actions that led up to the deportation debate, defined its terms of engagement, and came to characterize the lives of Lupe, Liat and other migrants like them, both within and beyond the debate. Each chapter title represents an

intimate condition, containing within it seemingly opposed features that are in fact mutually dependent. I divide the thesis into three parts.

Part I establishes the foundation for my study. In Chapter One, *Proximate Foreigners*, I describe the ethnographic lay of the land. I provide an overview of the ideal of belonging in Israel and of the ways in which historic patterns of Jewish migration and settlement have been altered in recent decades through successive governments' recruitment of migrant labour on an international scale. I trace how local conditions in Israel, and in Tel Aviv in particular, have established a foundation for the proliferation of feminized and long-term migration, and I explore how these migrations and their outcomes must be understood as operating within the framework of Israel's primary political and social conflict – the military occupation of Palestinian lands in Gaza and the West Bank, and the relationship with Palestinian residents of these occupied territories. While women who have been recruited to work as caregivers through the "Foreign Worker Program" (FWP) have always been foreigners and non-citizens in Israel, they have simultaneously been drawn in to this receiving society, living in proximity to Tel Aviv residents in ways that Palestinians rarely have.

In Chapter Two, *The Politics of Intimacy*, I explain both the analytical framework according to which I came to organize my data, and the methods that I used to collect these data. I begin by situating my research questions in overlapping anthropological literatures on the feminization of global migration, migrant motherhood, and the lives of people who do not have legal status in the countries where they live. I then review the literature on intimacy in order to build a picture of the politics of intimacy as a concept

capable of addressing new empirical and theoretical questions that have emerged in my study. In the second part of this chapter I explain my entry into the field, including the genesis of my project, and the ways in which being a participant observer informed my study and analysis. Finally, I describe the sites and activities through which I conducted research, further setting the scene for the ethnography that follows.

In Part II of the thesis, I develop my argument ethnographically, exploring how the politics of intimacy operated on a day-to-day basis for women who were pregnant and/or became mothers while living without legal status in Israel. I describe the interdependent relationship that developed between Israeli government policies, laws, bureaucratic practices, and socio-cultural expectations on the one hand, and illegalized women's personal decisions, strategies of engaging with bureaucracy, social organization, modes of performance and political activism on the other. The titles of Chapters Three, Four and Five, on *Permanent Temporariness*, *Visible Invisibility* and *Inclusive Exclusion* each label and highlight the intimate conditions that have emerged out of, and also perpetuated, the politics of intimacy. My ethnographic material explores how these conditions are internally coherent, despite appearing contradictory at the outset. I use case studies of two illegalized migrant women, one whose child was slated for deportation in 2009, and one who gave birth in the same year, as anchoring points for each chapter.

In Part III, I discuss some impacts of the politics of intimacy as they operated in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011. In Chapter Six, *A Privileged Underclass*, I describe the social and political positioning that illegalized migrant women have come to occupy in Tel Aviv vis-à-vis other migrants and Israeli citizens of diverse class and ethnic

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backgrounds. I explore new manifestations of the social geography of Tel Aviv, as I describe the mobilization of anti-migrant sentiment in the city's southern neighbourhoods where Jewish Israelis, who have traditionally been marginalized within the city's social and economic milieu, came to view migrants as undeserving of the attention and privileges associated with the anti-deportation campaign and the other initiatives that were established to integrate illegalized migrants into Israeli society. In the final section, *Open Endings*, I return to the case studies that I discussed in Part II and to the details of the deportation debate. I review some outcomes of this debate before synthesizing the themes of the dissertation and presenting a summary of my findings.

The final intimate condition of "open endings" that emerges in this concluding section is common to all ethnographic work. While the analysis presented in these pages holds stories and people together, naming their experiences as well as categorizing, analyzing and contextualizing them in theory, the social institutions that they have created around them and the lives of these individuals and societies are always in a state of flux. What was once observed about them is, therefore, already in the past, particularly in the ever-shifting political landscape of Tel Aviv where the social and political structures relevant to migrants, and especially asylum seekers, have changed significantly since 2011. As Griffin has written, "all ethnography is history" (2008:xx). It is in the interest of acknowledging and respecting the passing of time and the certain change that has affected the people and the social world described here, that this dissertation ends with an eye toward the future, including some theoretical questions that are yet to be addressed and some empirical points of interest that are on the cusp of emerging.



Diagram 1: Legalized and illegalized status in Israel

	Citizen	Non-citizen
Legalized - Has legal status in Israel, cannot be deported	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Native born, Jew</li> <li>2) Native born, non-Jewish denizen of the British Mandate Palestine (Palestinians, Druze, Bedouins) who were determined to be associated with Palestine immediately preceding the establishment of the State of Israel</li> <li>3) Foreign born, child of an Israeli citizen (woman or man)</li> <li>4) Immigrant, Jew in possession of a certificate of <i>Aliyah</i> (literally “ascension”, used interchangeably in Hebrew for immigration to Israel).</li> <li>5) Immigrant, non-Jewish spouse of a Jew, children of a Jew and their spouses, grandchildren of a Jew and their spouses in possession of a certificate of <i>Aliyah</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Tourist – three month visa issued upon arrival</li> <li>2) Migrant worker (participant in the Foreign Worker Program) – work visas issued for specific period of time (dependent on the work sector for which they are issued)</li> <li>3) Asylum seeker from countries designated by the United Nations as unsafe for return – in possession of documentation</li> <li>4) Asylum seeker with refugee claim in process</li> </ol>
Illegalized - Does not have legal status in Israel, can be deported at any time		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Tourist who has overstayed visitor’s visa</li> <li>2) Migrant worker who has overstayed work visa</li> <li>3) Native born, child of a legalized or illegalized migrant worker</li> <li>4) Native born, child of an illegalized tourist who has overstayed visitor’s visa</li> </ol>

## **PART I**

### **CHAPTER ONE: PROXIMATE FOREIGNERS, THE ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT**

In this chapter I provide the background of the study, focusing primarily on the national context in which my research took place, but also locating the Israeli case inside global patterns of migration. After an explanation of the nature of migration to, and belonging in, the Israeli nation state, I describe the ways in which developments in Israeli political and economic spheres, as well particularities of the feminization of migration around the world, have set the stage for non-Jewish women from the Global South to settle in Israel. I show how factors in migrant recruitment and settlement have depended on migrant women being proximate foreigners who can simultaneously be included in, and excluded from, Israeli social and civic life. Specifically I demonstrate how these women and their children have, on the one hand, participated in “transforming the coordinates” of Israeli ideals of belonging (Liebelt 2011:2) by integrating into society and settling for long periods in the country’s largest urban centre. On the other hand, however, both women and their children live in Tel Aviv without legalized status and in danger of deportation. Further, the presence of migrant women and their children has also reinforced and strengthened administrative and cultural practices that emphasize Israeli ideals of foreignness and non-belonging, both with respect to migrants’ own precariousness in Israeli society, and with respect to established notions of Otherness that

have applied to Palestinian citizens of the State of Israel and of the Occupied Palestinian Territories over the course of the country's history.

### **Ideals of Belonging in Israel**

An understanding of the significance of migrant worker recruitment and settlement in Israel requires a brief outline of the country's history of migration and the granting of citizenship status to some, but not all, migrants. Specifically, it is essential to clarify the ways in which Jewish immigration and settlement have been central to the construction and maintenance of Israel as an ethno-national state. Established in 1948 as a parliamentary democracy and Jewish-majority State in the Biblical "Land of Israel" (historic Palestine),<sup>3</sup> the State of Israel is an "ethnic republic" (Peled 1992) whereby citizenship is granted based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* or 'the right of blood'. The Law of Return, established in 1950, specifies the character of this principle in the Israeli context. Originally declaring that "[E]very Jew has the right to come to this country as an *oleh*", literally one who ascends to Israel and, colloquially, one who is an immigrant, this law was amended in 1970 to include the right to *aliyah* (ascension/immigration) for "the child, grandchild or spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008). The right of Jews to

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<sup>3</sup> Recent scholarship in both academic and activist/advocacy contexts has defined Israel's claim to be a democratic Jewish state as a contradiction in terms (see Beinart 2012). Pointing out the impossibility of this duality, particularly in consideration of Palestinian citizens of Israel (Hussein and McKay 2003:19-33) but also, increasingly, as a result of migrant worker presence in the country (Liebelt 2011a:24), these critiques highlight a problem that is central to this dissertation: that in order to maintain a Jewish democracy, the rights of non-Jews must be forcibly and undemocratically curtailed.

immigrate to Israel is defined through this law and is labelled in popular discourse as “the right of return”.

Indeed, both before and after the formation of the Israeli state, Palestine was the site of several waves of Jewish immigration. Many early Jewish immigrants chose to move to Palestine in response to religious and/or Zionist principles - now made explicit in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel - that the state was a Jewish homeland open to “the Ingathering of the Exiles” (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008). It is significant that the majority of these immigrants were also fleeing discriminatory policies and anti-Semitic violence in the countries where they lived, particularly in Eastern Europe where pogroms claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Jews in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Brinkman 2010:28). Quotas and immigration restrictions that were imposed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Britain, the United States of America, Canada and Argentina severely limited or prohibited Jewish immigration to these countries, (Brinkman 2010:29, Foner 2002:148), thus giving Jews another reason to consider Palestine as a destination. Between 1924 and 1927, 59, 738 Jews moved to Palestine (Shaw 1991:185).

Another wave of Jewish migration occurred in the years immediately preceding the founding of the Israeli state in 1948, when vast numbers of Jewish refugees, including those fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe and large portions of the Jewish communities in Yemen and Iraq, moved into the country. Between 1933 and 1945, 249,467 Jews immigrated to Palestine (Shaw 1991:185). Subsequent waves of immigration included state-managed “rescue operations” that responded to civil unrest in countries with substantial Jewish populations by dramatically increasing flights from those countries to Israel during concentrated periods. In

1955 and 1956, with anti-colonial, independence struggles in North Africa as well as turmoil in the aftermath of the failed British-French-Israeli 1956 Suez invasion, the Jewish Agency for Israel, a state organization responsible for immigration and immigrant absorption, aided in transporting 50,000 Jews from Morocco and 13,000 from Tunisia to Israel (Hakohen 2003:243). In 1991, through "Operation Solomon", the Jewish Agency airlifted 14,310 Jews out of Ethiopia in less than a day and a half (Spector 2005:1). Between 1989 and 2001 close to a million Jews from the Former Soviet Union immigrated to, and settled in Israel, also with the aid of the Jewish Agency (Al Haj 2004:84). These initiatives have massively increased the Jewish population of Israel over a relatively short period. Perhaps more relevant to a discussion of belonging in Israel, however, these waves of migration, and particularly the "rescue operations", demonstrated the commitment of successive governments to fund the recruitment and absorption of Jewish immigrants to the State of Israel.

Historically, Israeli citizenship has also been available to (non-Jewish) resident Palestinians, Bedouins and Druze who remained within the boundaries of the newly established state after 1948, or those who were born in Israel after that time. These forms of citizenship, however, involve modifications of the rights and obligations accorded to Jewish Israelis, most famously with respect to family law and service in the Israeli army. As such, they are the subject of much controversy (Smoocha 2000, Bishara 2001, Rabinowitz 2005). Additionally, a substantial academic literature outlines how such differential citizenship in Israel is applied both officially and unofficially in ways that reflect, and perpetuate, the privileging of Jewish Israelis over non-Jewish Israelis (Herzog 1999, Amal 2004, Levy 2005, Ismael 2006). Hence, key to any discussion of citizenship in Israel is the need to

acknowledge those who are excluded from both the benefits and obligations of particular rights.

Moreover, in Israel, the distinction between residents of the country who have citizenship and residents of the country who do not have citizenship is particularly contentious. It is also particularly relevant to the current management of migrant workers and those without legal status. As a result of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and the ensuing violent conflict, large numbers of Palestinians moved, or were expelled by force, from the villages in which they lived. Many joined family or resettled in villages along the west banks of the Jordan river and the Dead Sea, an area then governed by Jordan, or alternatively in a large area surrounding Gaza city, an area then occupied by Egypt. Approximately four million Palestinians (Levine 2009:2) now live in what is known as the “West Bank” and “Gaza Strip”, territories that have been occupied (and in the case of East Jerusalem, annexed) by Israel since the so-called Six-Day War in 1967. Despite having been born in places that are now contained within the borders of the State of Israel, and despite currently living in areas that are under Israeli military occupation, Palestinians who reside in the West Bank and Gaza Strip do not hold Israeli citizenship. They must also pass through border checkpoints (controlled by the Israeli army) in order to enter Israel or, indeed, to pass through Israel to travel to other parts of Palestine.

Palestinians claim the right to return to, and settle in, the villages where they and their family members once lived. The Palestinian Right of Return is a political principle based on Article 13(b) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It asserts that, as refugees, Palestinians and their descendents (those in the Occupied Territories as well as those in

countries around the world) have the right to return to, repatriate, and reclaim lands that they once occupied and to become fully enfranchised citizens in whatever state may exist in that location (LeVine 2012). Israeli governments have actively opposed this principle on the grounds that such a large migration of Palestinians to Israel would threaten, if not alter entirely, the Jewish character of the state.<sup>4</sup> Underlying this opposition is a rising discourse (and critique of this discourse) within Israel which asserts that population demographics, specifically a high Palestinian birthrate compared to a low Jewish birthrate, already point to the fragility of a Jewish majority in Israel (Zureik 2003, DellaPergola 2004).

As of the 2008 census, the population of the State of Israel was just over seven million people, comprised of a 75% majority of Jews and a 20% minority of “Arab Israelis” (herein referred to as Palestinian citizens of Israel)<sup>5</sup>. In religious terms, 16% of Israelis are Muslim, 2% are Christian, and 1.5% are Druze (Central Bureau of Statistics 2008).

Additionally, ethnic groups that exist within, and cross-over standard census categorizations

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<sup>4</sup> Official opposition to the settlement of Palestinians as citizens in Israel (both through and beyond the right of return) has been obvious by actions of successive Israeli governments to alter existing citizenship laws in ways that explicitly prevent such settlement. For example, the “Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law”, passed by the Israeli parliament in 2003, banned family members of Palestinian Israelis from automatically obtaining residency or citizenship in Israel, despite their family connections. In response to criticism of the law, then-Prime Minister Sharon publically stated, “[T]he State of Israel has every right to maintain and protect its Jewish character, even if that means that this would impact on its citizenship policy” (Sharon, quoted in Pipes 2012)

<sup>5</sup> The terms “Arab Israeli” and “Israeli Arab”, conventions within Israeli politics and a majority of global media, are increasingly challenged by Palestinian nationalists and their allies who claim that such language “de-Palestinizes” (Rouhana 1997) Palestinian citizens of Israel and wrongly implies that they do not share in the political aspirations of Palestinians who live in the Occupied Territories. The term Palestinian citizens of Israel, on the other hand, has increasingly been used in popular and academic scholarship to refer to possible familial, cultural and political links between these populations.

(eg. Bedouin Muslims and Arab Jews) also have distinct political and social identities which have become significant in the socio-cultural milieu of the contemporary nation-state. Thus, even statistical representations of Israeli citizens are rife with complexity and contradictions. Despite its design as a cohesive, ethno-national state, Israeli society is highly diverse, deeply conflicted, and characterized by everyday manifestations of old and new religious, ethnic, national, racial and class divisions.

### **History and development of the Foreign Worker Program**

The late development of a foreign worker program in Israel is one of the clearest examples of the ways in which migration and belonging have been closely monitored and tightly controlled in Israel. While other industrialized countries with similar patterns of economic growth have for decades used “foreign workers” to fill gaps in the labour market,<sup>6</sup> until the late 1980s the recruitment of such labour in Israel was considered by state officials to be “undesireable” and likely to create “social problems” that were too cumbersome for the society to bear (Ramon 1988, quoted in Rajjman and Kemp 2007:31).

In 1991, however, the Israeli government responded to a labour shortage “crisis point”, by convening the Knesset to implement an official Foreign Worker Program (FWP) (Drori 2009:8). Scholars have attributed this change in policy, and the subsequent shift in attitudes toward migrant-worker recruitment, to the outbreak of the 1987 Intifada (Roer-Strier and Olshtain-Mann 1999, Semyonov et al. 2002). For several years prior to

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<sup>6</sup> Some examples of institutionalized foreign worker recruitment include the Bracero program in the United States of America (first implemented in the 1940s), Germany’s guest-worker program (widely used throughout the 1950s), and Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (operating since 1967).



the Intifada, Palestinian workers who lived in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had provided a pool of cheap labour that helped build and sustain the Israeli agricultural and construction industries. Estimates suggest that 46% of the total workforce in the Gaza Strip, and 36% of the workforce in the West Bank, based their livelihoods on these unregulated but steady opportunities for work (Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 1987). The start of the Intifada, however, and its escalating unrest began to prevent Palestinian day labourers from regularly going to work in towns and cities “across the border”. This was because measures taken by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) to heighten security at the borders led to periodic closings of key checkpoints, long line-ups, and the systemic harassment of would-be workers. At the same time, violent skirmishes among Palestinians within the Occupied Territories, were on the rise as members of the Intifada leadership began to pressure those working in Israel to boycott their jobs and join the active resistance (Rajzman and Kemp 2007:33).

The 1987 Intifada, therefore, both represented and encouraged a marked intensification of what has been described as a “paradigm of separation” between Israelis and Palestinians (Rajzman and Kemp 2007:32; see also Shafir and Peled 2002). As the long-standing (and unregulated) employment relationship between Israelis and Palestinians was disrupted, a migrant-worker recruitment program that would reduce Israel’s dependence on Palestinian labour and, indeed, which would assert this severance explicitly as the product of Palestinian violence, became increasingly attractive in Israeli government and political circles.

**The caregiving sector:  
A response to changes in demography, gender and healthcare**

At the same time, although the Intifada contributed significantly to the establishment of migrant worker recruitment in Israel, a combination of other factors including trends in Israeli demography, changing social and work roles for Israeli women, and healthcare reform (Drori 2009) were also catalysts for the development of a caregiving portion of this program and the expansion of the program in general.<sup>7</sup> Over the past several decades, migrations of elderly Jews from countries all over the world have contributed to already high rates of aging in the Israeli population. As in other industrialized countries, Israeli women's increased presence in the public sphere, and especially in the labour market since the 1970s, has taken them away from the domestic and reproductive work for which they were traditionally responsible. Eldercare has been particularly vulnerable to these shifts as the nuclearization of households and the geographic mobility of grown children has led to a decrease in three-generation households and in the ability and desire of women to care for elderly or infirm relatives.

Caring for the elderly in Israel thus changed in the later part of the twentieth century from unpaid labour done in the home by (female) family members to paid labour undertaken outside the home in various institutional settings. While this work, like agriculture and construction, was low-wage and difficult, eldercare had never been part of the unregulated employment sector described above, and was never work that had been

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<sup>7</sup> Originally designed to fill labour gaps in agriculture and construction, the Foreign Worker Program has come (as of March 2013) to include six sectors. They are nursing care, agriculture, construction, welding and industrial professions, hotel work and ethnic cookery (Israel Government Portal 2013).

relegated to Palestinians. For one thing, eldercare was women's work, and Palestinians from the Occupied Territories workers were exclusively men. Additionally, eldercare work required particularly intimate engagements with Israeli citizens and was carried out in government-run institutions. Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians and their respective governments, including but not limited to a deep-seated mistrust of Palestinians on the part of Israelis, meant that Palestinian labour was not favoured for this labour sector. Instead, nursing and caregiving positions in old age institutions had for years been filled by women, mainly from the former Soviet Union, whose own recent immigration to Israel, and "occupational downgrading" as a result, had filtered them into the low-wage workforce of geriatric care (Remennick 2001).

Changes to the organization and ideology of caregiving in Israel, what has been called "care regimes" (Bettio, Simonazzi and Villa 2006, Doyle and Timonen 2008, Kröger 2010) particularly in the scholarship on European caregiving models, came to Israel with neoliberal reform and the privatization of health-related goods and services.<sup>8</sup> With the implementation of the 1988 Nursing-care Insurance Law, the Israeli National Insurance Institute (a branch of the public healthcare system) authorized the distribution of financial support to individual, "disabled elderly" citizens who could prove that they required "home visits" from staff who might assist them in bathing, dressing and household management (Bar-Giora 2007:11). This development, combined with a move towards private, insurance-based healthcare, led to a shift in attitudes toward eldercare in

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<sup>8</sup> For an explanation of neo-liberal reforms in the Israeli healthcare system since the 1990s, including a shift to a "post-Fordist model" in which health services and goods in Israel were being privatized and incorporated into the business sector at especially high rates, see Filc and Davidovich 2005.

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Israel. Specifically, it engendered an increased demand for a flexible and private workforce of caregivers who would live with disabled or elderly people in order to provide on-call individualized service. Eager to address this demand, managers of the FWP expanded the program beyond the labour sectors of construction and agriculture to include an eldercare component. The program has since allowed women and men from various countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia and South America to secure temporary work visas in order to provide private, home-based care for individuals deemed dependent by an evaluation process administered by the Israeli Ministry of Interior (Drori 2009:57).

The inclusion of caregiving in the FWP has been responsible for a considerable increase in Israel's migrant worker population. Caregiving is currently the fastest growing sector within the FWP, and the only one in which there is no formal cap on the numbers of permits that can be issued. In 2009, for example, 57,000 new permits were issued to prospective employers of caregivers, a sevenfold increase from the 8,100 permits that were issued in 1996, the year permits for eldercare were first offered (IRIN 2012). During my fieldwork, when caregivers constituted 70% of all legally contracted workers in Israel (Zohar 2009), the sight of elderly Israelis with their migrant worker wards was pervasive throughout Tel Aviv, and indeed iconic of the FWP.

**Long-term visitors:  
Recruiting a particular kind of migrant worker**

The inclusion of caregiving in the FWP has also been responsible for the proliferation of a certain kind of migrant worker – one who is female, of child-bearing

years and prepared (and potentially eager) to stay well beyond the time period originally specified in the work contract. While the particularities of how and why migrant women have become long-term residents in Israel will be elaborated upon ethnographically in the chapters that follow, it is necessary to highlight a few patterns, both global and local, that have set the foundation for this trend to occur.

First, the addition and expansion of a caregiving sector in the FWP effectively feminized migrant work in Israel. As is clear from the rich and engaged scholarship on the feminization of migration around the world, this local development occurred in the context of a global trend. The massive increase, in recent decades, of women engaging in migrant work can be explained by both push and pull factors. Specifically, women throughout the Global South are increasingly heading households and becoming responsible for providing financial support for children, parents, siblings and spouses (Sassen 1998, Chang 2000, Parreñas 2001). Pushed by the impetus to earn money abroad and, often, to leave abusive relationships with spouses or other family members, the proportion of women who migrate independently and in search of jobs has risen dramatically since 1960, when the vast majority of women migrants were accompanied by, or joined, their spouses in host countries (UN-INSTRAW 2007:2-4). At the same time, the increased demand for domestic workers and careworkers in industrialized countries pulled migrants in need of work to urban centres in North America, Europe and the Middle East. Employers' preference for hiring women to fill these jobs has been associated with common ideas that women have more natural or well-developed capabilities than men do in the areas of care (Wong 1994, Constable 2007). In the Israeli

case, both men and women caregivers are recruited to work in this sector. Despite the fact that male workers are preferred over female workers in some instances,<sup>9</sup> women still constitute the vast majority of foreign caregivers in Israel.

Second, the caregiving sector ushered into Israel a population of migrants who were in their own child-bearing and child-rearing years. Similar push and pull factors help to explain this trend. Women in the Global South who are called upon to fill the role of breadwinner do so as members of a family. Whether they are single women who must support parents and siblings, or mothers who must support their children and/or spouses, migrant women typically fall between the ages of 20 and 40 (Hochschild 2003). Studies of domestic and care workers around the world have explored how this age demographic is also favoured in recruitment processes where agencies shape their rosters to include women who fall into an age bracket that is attractive to employers (Constable 2007:73).<sup>10</sup> The physical demands of carework and domestic work, especially eldercare, also select for women who are able-bodied, healthy and strong, all qualities associated with youth.

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<sup>9</sup> Male caregivers are uniformly preferred by male Orthodox Jews whose observance of gender segregating norms include not touching or being touched by women (see Heymann, 2006). Additionally, I was told by male caregivers that their employers preferred them over women due to their strength and abilities, particularly in handling either overweight or wheelchair-bound elderly people.

<sup>10</sup> The relationship between age preference and domestic worker recruitment is complex. Both sending and receiving countries may impose regulations on women who choose to migrate, including minimum or maximum age requirements. Additionally, employer and agency preferences do not follow a set pattern, even in a single location. Many variables come into play as some employers and agencies favour what they perceive as older women (if they are also married with children) over younger women (if they are single and liable to seek out a relationship). Regardless of the many mitigating factors in employer preference, the range of migrant domestic workers around the world remains fixed in an age bracket that corresponds with their child-bearing and child-rearing years.

Agencies that recruit caregivers to work in Israel and that post the criteria for potential workers online, typically advertise that they are looking for workers between the ages of 20 and 45.

Third, the addition of the caregiving sector to the FWP, including unique legal stipulations on their employment, has encouraged the migration of people who are willing, able and often eager to stay for extended periods of time in Israel. Specifically, while caregiver visas are initially issued for a maximum of 63 months (five years and three months), Israeli citizens who employ migrant caregivers are able to request legal extensions to these visas. The following conditions apply. If the caregiver has worked with the same employer for at least one year, if both employer and caregiver employee are registered with a Licensed Recruitment Agency and, if the employer is “dependent on [the] care” of the caregiver, the employer may extend the workers’ visa for up to several years. The supposed nature of carework, that is, the emotional attachment that can develop as a result of careworkers living in the homes of their employers, is cited as the impetus to create special circumstances around the length of time that migrant careworker visas are valid in Israel (Israel Government Portal, 2013). Significantly, it is the employer or employment agency, and not the worker, who has the right and ability to extend the work visa. Consequently, workers who chose to change employers, employment agencies or work sectors are not eligible for a visa extension. As will become clear in the dissertation, many migrant women remain in Israel for extended periods of time, even if they lose their work visas and do not have legal permission to work in the country.

Hochschild has observed on an international scale that women who migrate independently of male partners have a tendency to stay – with or without legal status – in the countries to which they migrate (2003:21). In the Israeli case, legal stipulations in the work contract that allow, and indeed request, migrant women to be flexible with the period of time that they plan to stay in their jobs, contribute to the acceptance and manifestation of this tendency.

**City of migrants:  
Settlement in Tel Aviv and beyond**

Long occupying a position in the Zionist ethos as the “First Zionist City” or “First Hebrew City” (Azaryahu 2007:5) and subsequently as the quintessential “city of [Jewish] immigrants” (134), Tel Aviv has also become known over the past two decades as the migrant worker capital of Israel. The large population of the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality and its environs – 3.2 million residents in The Greater Tel Aviv Metropolis, which constitutes 43.2% of Israel’s population (Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality Website) – as well as the relative concentration of wealth in this part of the country, has made Tel Aviv a “focal point” for labour migration (Alexander 2007:90). The abundance of employment opportunities in Tel Aviv, both in legalized and illegalized labour markets, has made the city a logical destination for FWP participants as well as for tourists and asylum seekers who have gone to Israel with the intention of working and settling.

Beyond the obvious economic advantages of living in Tel Aviv however, migrants with various forms of legal status have also been attracted to the city because of its reputation as the country’s centre of cosmopolitanism, social and ethnic diversity, secular



life and relative insulation from the violence and conflict that has plagued other parts of the country. Migrants whom I met in Tel Aviv routinely echoed the sentiments of Israeli citizens who had also moved to the city, asserting that they chose to live there because it was more vibrant and exciting than cities like Haifa and also because it was free from the palpable tension that could be felt on a day-to-day basis in Jerusalem. Scholarship on migrant workers who live both with and without legal status in Israel has thus been focused on Tel Aviv, where the majority of migrants have resided and where these migrants have created and participated in a range of political and cultural initiatives. This scholarship has documented the long-term settlement and community development of migrants, including the construction of churches and religious organizations (Kemp and Raijman 2003, Liebelt 2008, 2011b), the establishment of leisure activities and educational programming (Kalir 2010, Paz 2010), and the publication of ethnic newspapers (Kama 2008, Paz 2009). However, the concentration of migrants in the southern neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv and, more specifically, the implications of this settlement on local populations and historic class divisions within the city, has been largely ignored in the ethnographic literature thusfar. I turn to these themes in Chapter Six, in order to address migrant settlement in light of current issues in the social geography of Tel Aviv.

The sustained presence of migrant women in Tel Aviv, and caregivers in particular, has had a particularly large impact on the social landscape of the city. For example, thousands of participants in the FWP who have been employed as “live-in” caregivers and required to reside in the homes of employers in cities and towns

throughout the country, have nevertheless chosen to “live” in Tel Aviv on their days off. These migrants (the vast majority of whom are women) travel to the city each week, stay overnight in apartments that they share with other migrants and patronize the dozens of food markets, clothing stores, travel agencies, money-transfer shops, restaurants and nightclubs that fill the Central Bus Station<sup>11</sup> and the surrounding neighbourhood of Nave Sha’anani. Young women who live and work as caregivers and domestic workers in Tel Aviv, on the other hand, have begun settling in neighbourhoods both within and beyond the migrant hub of south Tel Aviv. Many have learned and become fluent in Hebrew and have developed relationships with the elderly people with whom they have lived and worked, as well as with other migrants and Israelis who live among them.

Women migrants have thus come to occupy economic and social positions which are understood and presented as different from those previously occupied by Palestinian workers. In short, while Palestinian workers from the Territories were more likely to return home at night, or else remain “spatially segregated” when they did stay in Tel Aviv for periods of time (Portugali 1993:14), caregivers in the FWP (and here I refer specifically to those who have legalized status) have most often lived in the homes of their employers, made use of public parks, shopped openly in markets and shopping malls, and generally been visible participants of Tel Aviv society.

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<sup>11</sup> Tel Aviv’s Central Bus Station is a large and maze-like structure that more closely resembles a shopping mall than it does a bus terminal. With seven floors of commercial space, including retail, food service and entertainment venues, it offers a range of socializing opportunities for migrants who may not have other options of where to spend their days off.

Academic scholarship and popular media have examined the integration of female migrant workers into the Israeli economy and society, addressing the ways in which their perceived value to the nation and their distinctiveness from former Palestinian workers resonates on a variety of different levels. Research on the use of “compassion imagery” (Efrat 2006) and rhetoric within Knesset committee debates on migrant labour in Israel highlights governmental representations of migrant caregivers as necessary to the alleviation of the suffering and pain of elderly and incapacitated Israeli citizens and, indeed, of the country’s ailing healthcare industry in general. A series of Israeli films made in recent years, including ‘*Jellyfish*’ (Geffen and Keret 2007) and ‘*Noodle*’ (Shemi and Menahemi 2007), have similarly popularized the image of migrant careworkers and cleaners as contributors to Israeli society who neglect their own family obligations in order to fill the domestic positions that allow Israeli women to work outside the home and pursue creative and professional careers.

In turn, Filipina women working in Israel have expressed their connection to Israeli social norms by identifying and presenting themselves as “politically active Christian Zionists” (Liebelt 2008:567) who believe that Israel is the rightful homeland of the Jews. They often communicate their affinity for Jewish culture by observing Jewish holidays and religious rites. Additionally, journalistic accounts of migrant workers’ opinions on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict have reported on migrants’ tendency to “side with” or “root for” Israel and Israelis (Derfner 2002). In statements that match, or supersede, the negative feelings toward Palestinians that are expressed by many Israelis, migrants articulate fear or mistrust of Palestinians as they describe feeling vulnerable to

Palestinian-initiated violence, specifically suicide bombings on buses, some of which have killed or injured migrant workers. Migrants also report feeling vulnerable to economic downturns that are associated with the conflict and that could cause them to lose their jobs (Derfner 2002).

### **Being illegalized**

While migrant women have become a vital part of Tel Aviv society in some respects, their integration into the social and political life of the city and the country should not be overstated. Successive Israeli governments have attempted to monitor and control the actions and movements of this population in a number of ways, primarily through the structure of their recruitment. The FWP was established using a model of “unfree” labour (Miles 1987:32-33, Basok 2003:4) whereby workers were placed in a binding agreement that tied their visas to a particular employer and, therefore, did not allow them to circulate freely in the labour market or, indeed, refuse the demands of the employers to whom they were tied. In 2006, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled against this binding stipulation, on the grounds that limiting workers’ rights of mobility “violates the dignity and liberty of the foreign worker” (Israel Supreme Court 2006). But by May 2011, an amendment to the law was proposed and passed. Known by human rights organizations as the “Slavery Law”, the amendment reinstated the initial condition, enabling the Minister of the Interior to “restrict the number of times a migrant caregiver can change employers, to limit workers to specific geographical areas, and to confine

them to specific subsections of the nursing services” (Association for Civil Rights in Israel 2011).

Because migrants’ legal status in the country has been directly tied to their employment, women migrants who have worked as caregivers have lost their right to stay in the country when they quit their jobs, or, in cases in which they have been dismissed from their jobs, most commonly following the death of the person for whom they cared. Women in these circumstances who were not able to find another employer within 90 days of the loss of employment<sup>12</sup> have either left Israel or, more often, joined the ranks of other migrant women who have come to constitute an unauthorized, illegalized labour force of domestic workers.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Both migrant workers and migrant-worker advocacy organizations report that employers prefer to hire caregivers from outside the country as opposed to those already living in Israel (personal communication with staff member at *Kav LaOved*, Dec. 17 2009). While agencies facilitate new employment contracts, independent workers have an extremely difficult time finding new employment that falls under the legal definition of what is required for the FWP.

<sup>13</sup> My ethnographic research suggests that the labour market for unauthorized domestic work (especially house-cleaning) has expanded considerably in the past few decades, particularly in Tel Aviv. The increased demand for cleaners, as well as the pervasiveness of women working illegally in this sector, was evident in two high profile cases during my fieldwork. Over a period of a few months in 2010/2011, migrant women who had visas for caregiving were found working illegally as house-cleaners in the homes of both the Defense Minister and the Attorney General (Izenburg 2010, 2011). These cases triggered a public outcry including condemnations of the hypocrisy of political figures in Israel. At the same time, the cases attested to the frequency with which the law against employing migrant women as domestic workers was broken at that time. Many illegalized women cite the abundance and availability of domestic work, including the tendency of employers to offer them employment even if they do not have a work visa, as a determining factor in their decision to stay in Israel without legal status.

Besides losing their jobs, participants in the FWP are illegalized, that is, have had their work visas invalidated, in one of another three ways. Migrants are illegalized as a result of overstaying their labour contracts, which are typically issued for 63 months. Migrants are illegalized as a result of applying for refugee status within Israel, thereby losing their status as “foreign workers”. And migrant women have been illegalized as a result of giving birth to children in Israel. Specifically, after a 90-day period, a migrant woman who was legally employed as a “foreign worker” was required to either send her baby to her home country or else forfeit her work visa if she chose to keep the baby with her in Israel. The particularities and impacts of the law that is colloquially known as “baby or visa”, including the fact that this law was challenged and overturned in 2011, are addressed in detail in Chapter Three.

Many migrant women in Israel have also been illegalized as a result of overstaying their tourist visas. Women who gained entry to Israel through what is known as the tourist loophole, arrived in the country legally as tourists and were issued three-month permits upon arrival that allowed them to travel but not to work. These women, mainly from West African countries including Nigeria, Ghana, and Côte D’Ivoire, then found employment and/or settled in Israel with the intention of staying beyond the three months allotted to them.

**Deportations and “voluntary repatriation programs”:  
A recent history of governments’ attempts to curtail migrant settlement**

Over the past two decades, tens of thousands of migrants have been illegalized in one of the ways mentioned, making migrant “illegality” in Israel a well-known, if

sometimes poorly understood, phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> Some estimates suggest that approximately 50% of the 180,000 migrant workers who live in Tel Aviv lack legal status (Hotline for Migrant Workers 2013), while others indicate that the country as a whole is home for up to 250,000 “illegal” migrants (Guarnieri 2010), the majority of whom reside in Tel Aviv. Israeli governments have responded to perceived increases in “illegal” residents by organizing and implementing a series of deportations and arrests. These deportations, the first of which were conducted in the late 1990s, were sporadic and mainly targeted at men (Willen 2007:13). In 2002, however, the Israeli government initiated a large and well-funded campaign through which it criminalized, surveyed, racially profiled, arrested and deported both male and female migrants. This campaign targeted more people in more aggressive ways than had previous campaigns. The government also attempted to mobilize public support for the deportation through public service announcements and rhetorical tactics that portrayed migrants as a threat to the nation (Willen 2007:16).

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<sup>14</sup> Since 2010 there has been an explosion of interest, in both local and international media, in the illegalized migration of asylum seekers from Eritra and Sudan to Israel. Reports on these asylum seekers have further exacerbated confusion over how many illegalized migrant workers live in Tel Aviv. While asylum seekers have often been referred to, in media and in popular discourse, as “migrant workers”, and while they have been lumped in with FWP participants and tourists who have become illegalized in the ways mentioned above, the composition of the population of asylum seekers, how they migrate to Tel Aviv and how they are treated in social and legal terms once they settle in the city, make asylum seekers different from migrant workers in significant ways. I address the politicized terrain of migration terminology further on page 39 where I outline my own choices for which terms I use in the thesis. It is important to note here that although asylum seekers are also illegalized and also reside in Tel Aviv in large numbers, in this section I use the terms “migrants” and “migrant workers” to refer specifically to migrants who have become illegalized either by way of losing their work visas or by losing their tourist visas.

By far the most forceful aspect of the 2002 campaign to eliminate “illegal” residents from Tel Aviv, however, were the surprise, often violent, raids on migrants’ apartments, and the random inspections of people’s visas in areas of the city where migrants lived and socialized. These arrests and deportations were conducted by a new police force that was created in 2002 and which operated under the management of the Ministry of the Interior. The Oz Unit, or Oz as it became known, was named for the Hebrew word for courage. Its 400 officers, all of whom had monthly quotas that dictated how many migrants they were expected to arrest, quickly became a source of intimidation for migrants living without status in Tel Aviv.<sup>15</sup>

The 2002 deportation campaign also instituted a so-called “voluntary repatriation program” through which illegalized migrants were offered financial support if they agreed to leave the country voluntarily, that is, without being arrested, detained and deported. The financial support that was offered to migrants provided only one incentive for people to leave. The aggressive, violent and unpredictable behaviour of Oz officers, and the increasingly tense atmosphere for migrants that had been steadily building throughout Tel Aviv as a result of the deportation campaign, was certainly another powerful motivator. By the end of September 2003, approximately one thousand adults and children (the majority from Ghana) had left Israel of their own accord. By the end of 2005, after a second, similar “voluntary repatriation program” had been launched in January 2004, this number had risen to 140,000 (Golden and Kemp, 2007).

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<sup>15</sup> See Willen 2006 for a detailed phenomenological analysis of the effects of the 2002 deportation campaign on migrants’ everyday lives.



**Illegalized children:  
Emerging concern over Israeli-born children of migrant workers**

A decade after the Foreign Worker Program was established and as migrant women lost their legal status but settled in Israel, the issue of “illegal” children emerged as a new political and social concern. The 2002 and 2004 deportations and “voluntary repatriation programs” had been specifically designed to target migrant families, or illegalized migrants who had children living with them. In 2009, however, when the government announced its intention to deport 1,200 Israeli-born children, tensions over this new population reached a fever pitch.

A document published by the Knesset Research and Information Center in 2009 (and reported on by Kepler 2010) stated that, according to data collected by the health and education authorities, the government estimated that there were close to 1,800 children of migrant workers in Israel. Because illegalized migrant women who do not pay hospital fees are often not issued birth certificates, and because many illegalized women do not formally register their children with the Ministry of the Interior, exact numbers were difficult to ascertain. Research indicated, however, that 698 children were below the age of three, 475 were between the ages of three and six, and 600 were between the ages of eight and 12 (Kepler, 2010).

The possibility of granting formal status to the Israeli-born children of migrant workers and to undocumented residents of Israel had first become fodder for political debate in 2003 when then Minister of the Interior initiated a “battle over naturalization” (Kemp 2007:679) that took place both in government and in the media. Finally, on June 26, 2005, the government announced its decision that a select group of the children of

migrant workers - those who were born in Israel, who were over ten years old, who could speak Hebrew, and who had been schooled in the Israeli education system - would be granted permanent residency status and, then, citizenship at the age of 21 or upon their completing mandatory army service.

The ruling was presented by politicians and in popular media as a one-time only measure based on a “politics of numbers” (Kemp 2007:681) that ensured that the children represented such a small group of people that granting residency status and eventual citizenship to them did not set a precedent, and did not affect policy or practice long-term. Instead, the ruling was described as a humanitarian act that would happen only once, and only in consideration of the unique needs of the particular children at that time.

In fact, the 2005 ruling did affect the debate over illegalized non-Jewish, Israeli-born children in 2009, albeit only minimally. Migrants and activist allies were able to mobilize many more Israeli citizens in 2009 than they had in the earlier years, including celebrities and politicians from mainstream social and political groups who had not previously been associated with the struggle for the rights of migrants or people without citizenship. Leaders of the campaign sometimes cited the earlier, 2005 ruling as a precedent that could be drawn upon in the present and as a potential catalyst for more vigorous activism. More often, however, they encouraged and/or facilitated the development of new discourses that argued that the children deserved citizenship, regardless of previous migration policy or individual rulings.

The activities of migrants and their allies in 2009 and beyond, as well as those of activists who supported the deportation of all illegalized migrants, made the debate over

granting residency rights to illegalized children a pervasive issue in mainstream Israeli political culture. Unlike the situation in 2003-2005, the birth of illegalized children was not considered anomalous by 2009, nor was it taken for granted that they would necessarily be denied status. An example of this – and of how the 2009 campaign changed Israeli discourse – is apparent from the language used in the government’s online guide for migrant workers. Under the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of the webpage, and in response to the (apparently popular) query “My children are with me in Israel, what are their rights and legal status?”, the official government response was, and is, as follows.

*In principle*, your children are not allowed to stay in Israel after the expiration of their tourist visas. *Officially*, if your children are still in Israel after that time, they are considered illegal aliens. *However*, the Israeli government in a recent resolution provided permanent-resident status to [some] children of migrant workers (Israel Government Portal 2013, my emphasis).

The careful wording of this response, specifically the avoidance of concrete language stating what happens to children of migrant workers, and the inclusion of information on rulings that undermine official law, reflects the contests over the law as it pertains to this issue. Moreover, the reference to children having gone to Israel with tourist visas as opposed to those who had been born in Israel, reflects the government’s tendency to avoid explicitly addressing the fact that migrant women might also have children with them in Israel as a result of the children having been born there.

The deportation debate that began in 2009 brought the issue of native-born, illegalized children to the fore in ways not previously seen. However, while this 2009 debate inspired the questioning of established laws and practices regarding non-Jewish

migration and citizenship, it still failed to eliminate confusion and inconsistencies related to how existing laws and policies were carried out on the ground. Indeed, inconsistencies proliferated during the deportation debate, contributing to the contradictory nature and uneven enforcement of the government's management of non-Jewish migration to Israel. I explore these inconsistencies in greater detail in the ethnographic chapters in Part II of this thesis.

**Choosing words:**

**The politicized terrain of migration terminology**

Before providing ethnographic description of illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv, it is necessary to note the terminology that has been used and will continue to be used throughout the text. This is far from a simple task. Discussions of migration make use of various terms for people who do not have citizenship in the countries in which they live. These terms are the subject of much reflection and debate both in the academic literature as well as in government and popular media, where how one refers to migrants and migration often indicates his or her perspectives on migration policy. Recent debates over the use of the term “illegal immigrant” and “illegal alien” in the United States Supreme Court and among major media outlets in that country, for example, have revealed that the terms that are used to describe migrants who do not have legal permission to reside in the U.S. “has become almost as controversial as the issue” (O’Reilly 2012), and certainly as politicized.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In June 2012, the United States Supreme Court officially omitted the words “illegal immigrants” and “illegal aliens” from a ruling on a landmark immigration case. The

In the academic literature on migration, De Genova has problematized the term “illegal”, noting that it originates from, implicitly references and legitimizes exclusionary immigration regimes and the discriminatory attitudes that support such regimes (2002). He has, nevertheless, continued to use it in quotations in his work (2005, see page 255 for a discussion of his use of the term), asserting with other social scientists that the term’s utility comes from the fact that it is widely used by migrants themselves, is useful in cross-cultural comparisons and functions as an effective way to discuss critically the meaning and history of illegality as a concept (Ngai 2004:xix, Willen 2007:11, Schrover et. al. 2009:10). Others have rejected the term “illegal”, reasoning that its political and practical implications include criminalizing migrants, compromising asylum claims, and denying migrants their humanity (Koser 2005:5, Spencer 2011:158). Further, ethnographers have noted that “illegal” is not necessarily the most commonly used term among migrants in all places and that locally-specific terms and phrases are therefore more appropriate to use when analyzing a particular context (Castañeda 2007:26)

While other terms that are widely used in advocacy circles, such as “irregular”, “undocumented”, “*sans-papier*” or “*sin papeles*” bypass the complications of “illegal”, they are unsuitable for my purposes in this dissertation. Specifically, variations on the term “undocumented” are too general in that they fail to communicate that migrants without citizenship may indeed carry a number of documents with them – for example

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decision prompted a resurgence of the debate in the American popular media over the meaning and implications of using the term “illegal” to refer to residents of the U.S. who do not have citizenship status, specifically, the ways in which the term used to refer to these people influences perspectives on how they should be treated. See Vargas 2012, Garcia 2012 and Sullivan 2012 for more detailed arguments both for and against using the term “illegal” in this context.

permits based on temporary labour or residency contracts, or those equally temporary and partial permits imposed by external organizations such as the United Nations – and that these documents often confer everyday rights on their bearers such as whether or not they can work and where they may live. As Ticktin has noted, migrants often have “a slew of documents, both medical and legal – the telltale pile of papers that all those who are ‘paperless’ must carry wherever they go” (2006:40). The term “irregular”, on the other hand, conveys the opposite message to one I hope to express in my ethnography. The stories that I tell below attest to the fact that migration and migrant settlement that is not authorized by so-called receiving states is, in fact, an increasingly regular and common phenomenon, often encouraged or quietly sanctioned by these states in ways that are predictably associated with the perceived need for low-wage labour.

With all these points in mind, I’ve settled on the term “*illegalized* migrant” to refer to a person who has been *made* “illegal” by policy and/or discourse. While this term is particularly evocative for describing the Israeli context during my fieldwork, I suggest that it could be analytically useful in various contexts. Three overlapping lines of reasoning help to explain my choice to use the term “illegalized migrant”. First, this term is politicized. It refers implicitly to the state as the agent of illegalization, and thus clearly locates the source of illegality outside the individual. Just as the popular slogan “no one (or no person) is illegal” indicates, I wish to support the contention that it is not people who “are illegal”, but rather processes that label them as such. At the same time, these processes have real consequences. While other terms obscure the consequences of being made “illegal”, thereby euphemizing or downplaying the lived experiences of living with

that label and status, the term “illegalized migrant” highlights the severity of being categorized by policies and/or discourses that confer illegality on an individual.

Second, this term is active and continuous. Illegalized is the verb form of the noun illegal and thus refers implicitly to the dynamic way in which illegality is produced. As De Genova and Peutz have convincingly argued, “borders exist...everywhere migrants move” (2010:12). This is because a deportation regime “effectively transforms the *entirety* of the interior of any territorial space of ‘national’ community into an unrelenting regulatory sphere for migrants, a ‘border’ that is implosive, infinitely elastic and, in effect, truly everywhere...”(De Genova and Peutz 2010:52, my emphasis). Migrants are not illegalized in one moment or in one place (although this is also possible under particular circumstances), but rather in a fluid way as they encounter elements of this elastic border and have their relationship to that border defined and redefined in a continuous way.

Third, and in a related vein, this term is processual. As an active verb, illegalization refers to the continuum of legality along which it moves. While the term suggests a dichotomy between illegal and legal (a problem that has yet to be solved by any of the other terms that are commonly used), it nevertheless allows for change and process, that is, movement from one end of the continuum to the next, and perhaps a reversal of movement. Goldring, Berinstein and Bernhard (2009) have emphasized the importance of capturing the variability, irregularity, and temporally unstable quality of migrants’ legal positions in the countries in which they live. They refer to migrants as people with “precarious status” to draw attention to different authorized and unauthorized

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modes of entry into a country, and the varied “pathways to illegality” that these modes make possible (2009:240). Like these authors, I wish to make the point that “the line separating legality from illegality may be porous and fuzzy...” (Goldring et al. 2009:256), and that migrants may move back and forth across that line in ways that are not necessarily uniform or linear. Unlike these authors, however, I wish to maintain a clear and present contrast between being vulnerable to deportation and not being vulnerable to deportation. I therefore use the term *illegalized* to simultaneously convey the changeability of migrants’ legal status and its ultimate implication.

For all these reasons I also use the term *illegalized* to refer to forms of employment and workplaces that were deemed “illegal” for migrants by the Israeli government. This use of the term further clarifies my points that processes of illegalization are active and dynamic and that they create “fuzzy” lines between legality and illegality. For example, baby-sitting and domestic work are not inherently illegal forms of employment in Israel, nor are private homes or daycare centres necessarily considered illegal workplaces. During my fieldwork, however, these forms of work and workplaces were *illegalized* by the Israeli government in cases where the employees were “foreign workers” – whose visas specify the particular and singular labour sector in which they are authorized to be employed – or in cases where employees were *illegalized* migrants who were not authorized to work in any labour sector.

In contrast to the term *illegalized*, the term “illegal” (in Hebrew “*lo chooki*”), which is static, passive and places the responsibility for illegality on the individual or the workplace, will only appear in this dissertation in quotations. I use the term “illegal” in



the context of an individual having used it explicitly and/or to reflect government or media rhetoric in which “illegal/illegality” is taken for granted as a clear and unproblematic descriptor of migrants, migration patterns, or forms of employment.

I also use the term “migrant” to refer to an individual who has moved to Israel and who may fall into either the category of a person who is legalized or illegalized. This term is useful as shorthand for the more cumbersome “legalized or illegalized migrant”. Its generality is necessarily, however, in cases where I refer to all non-Jewish people who move to Israel (either as “foreign workers”, asylum seekers or tourists) and who do not have an obvious, legally-sanctioned or likely pathway to obtaining citizenship. An “immigrant”, in contrast, is different from a “migrant” in the Israeli context. Whereas a migrant moves to Israel with permission to stay only temporarily as a non-citizen, an immigrant moves to Israel with permission to stay permanently, as a citizen, by being a Jew, a descendent of a Jew or a spouse of a Jew. I use the term “immigration” for the Hebrew term *aliyah* (literally “ascent”) to refer only to the process of moving to Israel with permanent legal status and the guarantee of citizenship; and I will use the term “immigrant” or the Hebrew term *oleh* or *olah* (literally he or she who “ascends”) to refer to people who engage this process (see Diagram 1 for further clarification of the categories of citizen/non-citizen and legalized/illegalized).

In contrast, I use “migration” to refer to the processes engaged by non-Jewish people who have gone to Israel without permanent legal status and with no guarantee of citizenship. The term “migrant” therefore refers both to people who have migrated through official channels (with work or tourist visas) and to those who have migrated

through unofficial channels (as individuals who were trafficked or crossed borders in clandestine ways). I use the term “asylum seeker” to refer both to migrants who have refugee applications in process and to migrants who obtain legal permission to remain in Israel due to their international status as having arrived from war-torn countries (in this case, from Eritrea and Sudan).

Finally, the commonly used Israeli, Hebrew term for non-Jewish migrants from the Global South is “*oved zar*” (literally, “foreign worker”), taking its name from Israel’s Foreign Worker Program. Because both the English and Hebrew terms are often used in Israel as blanket terms (without knowledge of an individual’s actual migration status), and because they refer to migrants who arrived in Israel in various ways, they will only appear in the text in quotation marks. Similarly, the term “infiltrator” will also appear in quotations. It is a politically loaded and increasingly common word used by some Israelis to refer to asylum seekers who came across Israel’s border with Egypt, and by other Israelis to refer to all migrants without citizenship status.

## **Conclusions**

Commenting on the psychological, emotional and material divisions that developed between Jews and Palestinians who were living in a newly partitioned Jerusalem after 1967, Benvenisti has noted: “so basic is the cleavage, that a decisive component of the self-identity of Jews and Arabs alike is not who they are, but who they are not” (1995:25). In this chapter, I explored how Israel’s “foreign workers”, recently integrated into this complex and yet still largely dichotomous social and political milieu,

have been similarly defined less by who they are, than by who they are not. As proximate foreigners, migrant workers have become more integrated into Israeli society than the non-citizen Palestinians whose labour they were recruited to replace. They are still, however, unable to achieve the legal, political and social enfranchisement (including, but not limited to citizenship) of Jewish citizens of Israel and of Jews, the descendants of Jews and the spouses of Jews from elsewhere in the world who are automatically granted citizenship in Israel according to the Law of Return.

Migrant women have come to occupy a particularly paradoxical position in this social and political landscape. They have been welcomed, on one hand, into the neighbourhoods and private homes of Israeli citizens, lauded as essential contributors to Israeli society for their work as caregivers and house-cleaners and, often, invited to extend their work visas for several years. On the other hand, restrictions to their mobility in the labour force and laws that link giving birth to the invalidation of work visas, have made migrant women particularly vulnerable to being illegalized in Israel, reminding these women of their precariousness and non-belonging in this society.

Trends in global migration, as well as conditions that are particular to the Israeli case, have increased the likelihood that migrant women will stay in Israel, either with or without legal status. As they have settled and given birth to children, they have become more entrenched in the society and, simultaneously, more marginalized. Campaigns on behalf of their children who have been born in Israel have argued that these children should be granted residency status. Inconsistencies regarding the state of the law on this

matter, however, have increased general confusion over the rights of both women and children.

Migrant women in this context have thus come to live in deep states of uncertainty. They have joined the ranks of migrants in various places in the world who are subject to the legalizing and illegalizing practices of the countries in which they reside. This chapter concludes with a note on the ways in which scholarship can and should acknowledge this active (il)legalization, specifically the politicized, fluid and processual nature of legal status, and the policies and discourses through which legal status may be granted or taken away.

**CHAPTER TWO:  
THE POLITICS OF INTIMACY,  
AN ANALYTICAL, METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

“I didn’t think it would turn out this way is the secret epitaph of intimacy”  
(Berlant,1998:281)

In this chapter, I take a step back from the ethnographic context in order to position the events and conditions within my chosen analytical framework, namely, the politics of intimacy. I first situate my research in a place of overlap among the social science literatures on women’s labour migration, motherhood, and the lives of people without legalized status. I then review anthropological understandings of intimacy so that I can explore how this concept has unique potential to frame patterns emerging in the place of overlap among these literatures. I argue that defining intimacy as a socio-political condition that is the product of local-level politics, allows for a way to analyze the relationship between migrant women who are pregnant or new mothers, on the one hand, and the structures and ideologies of the places to which they migrate, on the other. Specifically, the politics of intimacy describes how these women are embroiled in continuous, multi-layered and contradictory engagements with the policies, laws, bureaucratic practices and cultural expectations of so-called “receiving” countries. The fact that intimacy, and its politics, so often produce unanticipated or paradoxical results, as the quote above suggests and as Stoler notes of the “tense and tender ties” (2001, 2006) of colonialism and empire, is a testament to the vulnerability, and also the power, that characterizes women migrants’ positions in the societies to which they migrate.

In the second part of this chapter, I describe my methods for studying the politics of intimacy in Tel Aviv, including where and how I conducted my research and what kind of data I collected. I situate myself as a researcher in this context, drawing on the concept of intimacy again in order to explore some contradictory elements of my own placement as a participant observer in the social and political environment where I lived and worked.

**Situating migrant mothers:**

**A point of intersection in the literatures on migrant labour, mothering, and the lives of people without legalized status**

In this section, I provide a short review of the emerging literature on what I call “migrant mothers”, or women who give birth to children in the countries to which they have migrated and in which they have no legalized status. Studies of these illegalized migrant mothers highlight two interrelated points. First, pregnancy and motherhood reconfigure both individual experiences of migration as well as a country’s migration policies and discourse as a whole. Second, because of their pregnancies and motherhood, illegalized migrant mothers become far more embedded than both male migrants and those female migrants who do not give birth to children in “receiving” countries. This creates a key contradiction in welfare states. Specifically, illegalized migrant mothers, on the one hand, have been subjects of government-sponsored programs that provide so-called vulnerable populations with access to goods and services. On the other hand, illegalized migrant mothers have also been key symbols of the perceived threat and danger of labour migration in general and the ways in which universal access to goods and services must be restricted.

Sociological and anthropological studies of migrant work have associated the feminization of labour migration with the expansion of the “global care chain” (Hochschild 2000) and the increased capacity and expectations for women, particularly single mothers, to act as primary breadwinners for their families (Sassen 1998, Chang 2000). As is detailed in the previous chapter, migrant women’s domestic responsibilities in the home country are described as “push factors” for migration, as the pressure to earn money for children, as well as their own aging parents, propel women to pursue economic opportunities abroad, often for extended periods of time (Parreñas 2001, 2005).

Studies also have shown how this migration arrangement is particularly fraught for women who engage in “transnational motherhood” (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997) and who therefore have to reconstitute or reconfigure family relations in order to accommodate the realities of migration (Alicea 1997, Avila 2008, Zontini 2010). Parenting from afar has often meant that women sacrifice “being there” in physical and emotional terms for their dependents in order to provide them with the material security that only employment overseas can facilitate (Parreñas 2005, Horton 2009, Fresnoza-Flot 2009). Indeed, the need to provide is a push factor that gains momentum with time, as dependents become more reliant on the foreign wages that a woman earns than they are on the woman’s economic presence at home or on her authority as the head of the household (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 2002:152). At the same time, the woman herself may come to feel more connected to her role away from home than she was, or is, to her role inside that home.

Increasingly, scholarship has had to address this kind of relationship between labour migration and motherhood. While for some women migration has prevented them from mothering or (more frequently) has meant that they must parent from afar, for other women migration has actually created the potential for motherhood or provided them with the possibility of having their children close by. The still small literature that exists on what I call migrant mothers, explores the experiences of pregnant women and mothers who do not fit into what have become standard understandings of so-called “transnational motherhood”. Rather than focussing on how women reconfigure their experiences as mothers in order to migrate, the studies address how these women are reconfiguring their experiences as migrants in order to become mothers.

For example, studies on migrant mothers have explored the ways in which illegalized migrant women who are pregnant and/or have children in the countries to which they have migrated are subject to contradictions in the welfare policies in those countries. Willen (2005) points to the “reproductive paradox” evident in policy structures that simultaneously include and exclude pregnant women migrants. This paradox, often figuring into the lives of mothers as well as pregnant women, is characterized by two related processes. First, pregnant women and mothers have specialized access to health services, social benefits, and temporary forms of citizenship despite the fact that they cannot become full citizens and have severely limited options for conferring citizenship on their locally-born children (see also Goldade 2009). Second, pregnant women and mothers usually attain an amnesty from immediate deportation because the law characterizes their physical, emotional and economic conditions as vulnerable (Castañeda



2008). Ironically, an illegalized migrant mother's so-called vulnerability thus becomes the only tool she has for claiming a slightly less vulnerable position than the illegalized migrant men or illegalized migrant women who are not pregnant or mothers.

As is evident from these processes, women not only reconfigure their own experiences of migration as a result of being pregnant, a mother and/or a so-called vulnerable migrant, they also reconfigure migration policies and discourses as a whole. Scholarship on public responses to migrant mothers highlights the significance of this group to affect changes in policies that have wide-reaching implications. Goldade (2008) notes the "paradoxes of proximity" that characterize the relationship of illegalized, Nicaraguan pregnant women and mothers in Costa Rica. While these women were previously allowed full access to pre-natal and peri-natal care within Costa Rican's state-sponsored commitment to "health without wealth" (also health without legal status) (Goldade 2009:484), anti-immigrant sentiment contributed to shutting down this form of open service provision in 2004. Goldade indicates that despite broad-based support for universal healthcare among Costan Ricans, the public became concerned that migrants were a "drain" on the healthcare system, particularly so in the case of illegalized Nicaraguan women and their children who were the most visible beneficiaries of this open access, and who signified the widespread and long-term effects of health for all (Goldade 2008:184).

Real or perceived population growth among people without legal status have produced especially acute forms of collective anxiety in countries, like Costa Rica, where "birthright citizenship" is conferred automatically on the children of illegalized migrants.

In these cases, migrant mothers have been seen as harbingers of an uncertain future, much more threatening than their male counterparts. Chavez has described the role of the news media in representing undocumented Latina women in the United States as a dangerous element of society capable of using their fertility as a tool in the “reconquest” or “take-over” of American society “from within” (2004:177). Over time, references to Latina women as “over-breeders” and to their children as “anchor babies” have established a specific branch of nativism in the United States in which women’s fertility has moved to the centre of political campaigns to control migration (Huang 2008).

In Ireland, rhetoric that cast the children of illegalized migrant mothers as “suspect patriots” (Tormey 2007:69) who were eligible for, but not deserving of, birthright citizenship, has also gone beyond discourse to affect major changes in policy. Fears about the fertility of illegalized African migrant women and the perceived proliferation of such women becoming pregnant and giving birth in Ireland, fuelled a referendum and subsequently a 2004 amendment to the constitution in which Irish citizens and the government overturned the law of birthright citizenship and erased the possibility that the future Irish-born children of illegalized migrant women would be granted automatic citizenship (Tormey 2007:71). In this case, as in those of the United States and Costa Rica, immigration policies and law became as much about the illegalized migrant woman’s body and behaviour as it was about the nature and borders of the state.

This recent literature on migrant mothers indicates some of the discursive and material patterns that have developed around migrant women, specifically illegalized migrant women, who choose to have children in “receiving” countries. It is evident that in

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numerous contexts, such migrant mothers occupy a unique position among illegalized migrants. The local politics of service migration and service provision (including but not limited to healthcare) have a particularly strong impact on these women's lives. In turn, women's bodies, most specifically their wombs, as well as their decisions about caring for, managing and displaying their bodies, are especially important in shaping immigration and citizenship policies as well as local attitudes about the importance of belonging and the ways in which ideals of belonging should be enforced.

In Parts II and III of this dissertation, I contribute another analytical and ethnographic example to this body of literature by describing the roles of illegalized migrant mothers and their children in Tel Aviv. I focus on and elaborate the two aspects of the literature that have been introduced here. First, I use my ethnographic material to expand and deepen understandings of the links among pregnancy, motherhood, migration and belonging. Specifically, I consider how illegalized migrant mothers have a highly integrated and interdependent relationship with state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic practices and socio-cultural expectations.

Second, I explain how the social context that develops around illegalized migrant mothers engenders particular roles for these women. While she is cast, through government rhetoric and policy initiatives, as vulnerable and in need of care and assistance, an illegalized migrant woman who chooses to have a child is also demonized as a threat to the nation-state. She is at once welcomed into the arena of social services, while at the same time she is held responsible for the stringent measures taken by the state to limit all migrants' access either to services or to legal status. Both positions, while

seemingly opposed, invite the same response from the “receiving” state, that of intense scrutiny and rigorous management. I use the concept of “intimacy” to underpin this analysis. A brief outline below of the ways in which intimacy has been understood and used in the anthropological literature will be followed by an explanation of how this concept is uniquely capable of addressing my ethnographic material.

### **What is intimacy?**

Appadurai has written that “intimacy is what the best ethnography was always about” (1997:115). While it is true that many anthropologists have studied intimate relations in some form or another, few have identified them as such, and fewer still have made intimacy itself an object of study and analysis. Indeed, intimacy has been one of the victims of a masculine bias in anthropology that feminizes and, thus undervalues, this particular perspective and focus. In contrast, pivotal studies that have treated intimacy seriously, as an agentive force in social life, have looked at how it operates in sexual and family relations, political engagement and the economy. My use of the concept of intimacy takes these studies as a point of departure while broadening their thrust and intent.

In mainstream usage, the word intimacy takes its meaning from its Latin origin of *innus* or innermost and has the connotation of being internal, private, and located “on the outskirts of the social” (Boym 1998:500). Anthropological work that has dealt explicitly with intimacy has troubled the assumptions underlying this definition, exploring the ways in which “there is nothing more public than privacy” (Berlant 1998:547) and nothing

more socially constituted than intimate life. Often the focus of this research has been sex, desire and sexuality as acts or identities that are publically mediated by cultural expectations of heterosexuality (Berlant and Warner 1998, Engebretson 2009), gender normativity (Ma and Cheng 2005, Shen 2008) and/or exoticism and difference (Frohlick 2007, Padilla 2007).

But intimacy has also been used to address the links between public practice and expectation on the one hand, and familial interactions on the other. Throop's (1999) study of Irish family dynamics explored what she called the intimate practices of life inside the family home as historically constituted and culturally defined. Thus, these intimacies were not bounded, nor were they isolated, but rather took their shape from governmental and church interventions. Gullestad has also disturbed an inside-outside dichotomy of family intimacy when describing the Norwegian home as a "key symbol" of broader "cultural categories, values and relations" that are responsible for constructing the familial relations which occurred within the household (1993:131).

In addition, the commodification of intimacy in all areas of relationality has been an important area of study for highlighting the blurring of boundaries between that which is intimate and that which is not, perhaps challenging the idea that any such boundaries exist at all. In her review of the anthropological body of work that has focused on the buying and selling of intimate relationships, experiences, and forms of labour, Constable has warned against overly moralizing the commodification of intimacy in ways that assume a prior or foundational purity of intimate relations (2009). While common-sense views give cause to lament the loss of a supposed authenticity, particularly in the areas of

romantic and sexual intimacies, ethnography has drawn out the historic and contextual qualities of intimate relations and has shown how “marriage-scapes”, for example, are multi-textured social engagements that are not at all bounded internally but instead “shaped and limited by existing and emerging cultural, social, historical, and political-economic factors” (Constable 2005:4).

Central to an understanding of the relationship between economics and intimacy is a consideration of intimacy not only as that which is simply “shaped or limited” by power structures, but also that which constitutes those forces and forms of power in a “two way” interaction whereby experiences of love, romance and sex are organized by principles of exchange, while also influencing the political-economic distribution of “resources, hierarchies, and power” (Padilla et. al 2007:xii). In her book *The Purchase of Intimacy*, a challenge to what she identifies as the cultural taboo of linking economics to intimate relationships, Zelizer uses the word “purchase” in two senses: “first, the frequent supposition that people use money to buy intimate relations and, second, the grip – the purchase – of intimacy on the forms and meanings of economic transactions” (2005:12). Zelizer demonstrates how intimate relations are essential to legal practices and workplace relations and, specifically, to market-based assessments of care, inheritance, and/or compensation for loss, despite the tradition within these fields of distinguishing such so-called rational matters from considerations of intimacy. Just as there is concern that intimacy is corrupted or eroded by economic and political processes, so is there a concern about the potential of intimate relations, particularly sentiment and emotion, to invade and demean the otherwise “cold” world of political-economic rationality (2005:25). The

capacity of “intimate subjectivities” to be transformative of various kinds of social relations (Constable 2009:58-59) is thus both evident, and evidently threatening, to conventional imaginings of the world.

While a blurring of boundaries is key to disrupting such conventions, it also creates an analytical puzzle whereby it becomes difficult to define, locate or use the concept of intimacy, even as it seems essential to discussing particular processes. This is because, in attempts to elucidate the mutual articulation of politics and intimacy, there is a risk of conflating the two, reducing intimate relations to simply another element of public life or vice versa. In other words, if public life and intimacy constitute one another, is there anything that differentiates these realms? More importantly, how do we retain a perspective and a critical eye on how differently situated people, particularly those with different forms and measures of power, experience this mutual articulation?

### **Why intimacy?**

Stoler’s work on the regulation of “intimate domains” within colonialism and empire (2001, 2002, 2006) offers a way to approach this puzzle. In her edited volume on “geographies of intimacy”, she and other contributors show that while “sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement and child-rearing” (2006:1) have been managed in distinctly public ways, they nevertheless constitute private sites that have a significance and pervasiveness that sets them apart from other aspects of public life. In fact, it is precisely because of the significance, pervasiveness and, I would add, inevitability of forms of “affect”, “carnal desires” and “comportment” (2001:3) that these intimate domains have always been the

ideal sites through which colonial administrations have been able to manage colonial subjects.

For Stoler, intimacy is a key concept for studying the various facets of social relations of control and the uneven distribution of power that has historically and continuously allowed for a dominant power to control the “microphysics of [the] daily lives” (2006:7) of its subjects. She makes use of Foucault’s biopolitics as “one analytic tool” for thinking about questions related to “whose bodies were made vulnerable, when, why and how – and whose were not” (2001b:894). She extends beyond this, however, in order to emphasize the imperial context that provided a foundation for the normalizing projects that Foucault outlines. Racism, as Stoler suggests as one example, “has not only derived from an ‘excess’ of biopower as Foucault claimed, but, as Balibar argues, from an ‘excess’ of nationalism”(2002:92-93). Such racism was consolidated in plantation economies and other labour regimes where “social kinds” were “produced and marked off” (2006:3), not only on the work site, in localized expressions of empire, but simultaneously in “labor recruitment, coercion, and sexual management that agribusiness deployed recurrently throughout the world” (2006:xii).

Therefore, to study the intimate, according to Stoler, “is not to turn away from structures of dominance but to relocate their conditions of possibility and relations and forces of production” (Stoler 2006:13). Indeed, the strength of Stoler’s work is that it allows for an exploration of the similarities between colonial power and various forms of rule and dominance that have not traditionally been understood as colonial. Her



comparison of plantation households and colonial households in two different time periods and global locations is worth quoting at length.

Although the plantation households of the Old South depended on slave labor and the colonial households of the Dutch, French, and British in Asia employed "contract coolies" and wage labor, anxieties within European colonial communities over intimacies and fear of contaminations by those who performed domestic service were strikingly the same. Those who worked as nursemaids, cooks, and houseboys were objects of *both fear and desire*. In the vulnerable domestic sphere, they were seen to transgress the protected boundaries of the very white homes where their presence allowed for the production of a particular kind of cultural space: the leisures, ailments, and sensibilities that defined class privilege and distinctions of race (Stoler 2001:10, my emphasis).

Stoler's work is thus particularly helpful in exploring how, as the "marrow" of empire (2006:13), intimate domains are sites of uneven power relations that offer points of complexity and potential transgression in a variety of settings. This complexity is born of the particular quality of this type of administration as a set of "tense *and* tender ties" (2001:1, my emphasis). Her incorporation of tenderness in this conversation follows the earlier observations of historian Sylvia van Kirk (Stoler 2001:2), and elaborates on a movement to balance previous scholarship that was solely focused on what could be characterized as the tension of colonial rule. Tenderness, as van Kirk and Stoler both emphasize, is equally part of dominance. Indeed, as Stoler further indicates, tension and tenderness have been close partners in the colonial, and other, encounters, and are mutually constitutive of one another in the practices of domination.

Relying on Stoler's contribution, my own analysis defines Tel Aviv in 2009-2011 as a site in which illegalized migrants were engaged in an intimate relationship with the

structures and ideologies of the dominant power under which they lived. Further, as in the examples cited above, this relationship was both based on labour relations and fraught with contradictory inter-personal engagements, including but not limited to “fear and desire”. The particulars of these relations will be addressed ethnographically. Here I want to focus on a second element of Stoler’s contribution, that of the paradoxical or dualistic quality of intimacy. Specifically, that intimate relations contain within them the potential for seemingly contradictory experiences of tension and tenderness, acceptance and rejection, safety and danger, opportunity and exploitation. Phrased another way, in terms more directly related to my purposes in this thesis, just as the boundaries between politics and intimacy are blurred, so are the boundaries between the binaries within intimacy itself.

### **Intimate conditions**

Stoler notes that scholarship on the links between empire and intimacy has tended to privilege some sites of intimate encounters over others. Domestic space, schooling, and public hygiene have been subject to analyses of intimacy, for example, while “the pungent, violent intimacy of prisons, barracks, and detention centres” has been largely ignored (2006:4). I understand intimacy as a concept that encompasses both domestic spaces and barracks, schools and detention centres, and as a concept that expresses the integral connection between these disparate sites. Despite a lack of focus on the locations in which it is considered most explicit, violence (and, I would add, neglect) is ever-present within intimacy as it is an integral element of closeness. It is part of the

relationship of closeness itself, constituting a kind of potential energy which can, at any moment, and without any contextual shift, be mobilized from dormancy into its most recognizable form. This potential is evident, in Stoler's words, in the "blur" between care and coercion, respect and neglect, and consent and rape (2006:xiii) that constitutes colonial rule.

In order to describe and characterize this "blur", I have structured this dissertation as an exploration of what I call "intimate conditions" – namely *permanent temporariness*, *visible invisibility* and *inclusive exclusion*. I argue, through the ethnography in Part II of this dissertation, that intimacy is not only an inter-personal condition that is descriptive of relationships between individuals, but a socio-political condition that defines relationships between individuals and the structures and ideologies of the places where they live, including the policies, laws, bureaucratic practices and socio-cultural expectations of those places. These relationships are created in an interdependent manner, through a "politics of intimacy", whereby individuals and the structures and ideologies of where they live are continuously engaged with one another and are mutually influential. Further, these relationships produce paradoxical ways of living, or intimate conditions, whereby such continuous engagements entail seemingly contradictory but mutually reinforcing features.

My purpose in this section has been threefold. First, to bring forth an empirical phenomenon and a population in need of further study. To this end, I described illegalized migrant mothers and the still nascent literature on their experiences having children in countries to which they have migrated, and the impacts which these legalized and

illegalized births have had on the structures and ideologies prevalent in those contexts. Second, I suggested intimacy as a concept uniquely capable of analyzing the politics of these women's relationship to the countries to which they migrated, and the conditions of life that emerge from, and perpetuate, such a relationship. Third, I contextualized my study of relations of intimacy in a wider body of literature that defines and locates this concept in practices of dominance and empire.

In the section below I situate myself as a researcher, exploring how I conducted my study of illegalized migrant mothers in Tel Aviv, and the politics of intimacy which enveloped me in this context. After describing my research methods, I provide some background on the genesis of the project and the particular difficulties I encountered while conducting the study.

**Methods:**  
**Situating myself**

I began this research as a continuation of my lifelong interest in, and active engagement with, issues of migration. As a child and grandchild of migrants and refugees, I've always been fascinated by stories of people moving from one place to another and embarking on lives in places foreign to them. Through my studies I came to understand that my initial perspective on migration was very specific. My grandparents were compelled or forced to leave the places that they once knew as home, and their families and family histories disappeared from those places soon after they left. They never went "back home", never expressed interest in doing so, and rarely even talked about the experiences they had had there as children. Instead they invested whole-

heartedly in the places to which they migrated, and they expected, or hoped, that others would treat them as full members of the place in which they lived and worked. While my parents' circumstances were quite different from that of their parents, they too moved throughout their lives, settling in different places at different times and always attempting to blend in. I grew up understanding that people came from a family, and perhaps a culture, but they didn't necessarily come from a place. Home was where you made it.

This particular view shaped my own travel, work and activism. First in Quito, Ecuador where I worked as a teacher in a school that was run by indigenous Quechua migrants from the highlands, and then in Ontario and British Columbia where I was part of various efforts to organize social and political activities both with Mexican and Caribbean migrant workers in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, and with Filipino migrant workers in Canada's Live-in Caregiver Program. I learned quickly that my idea that people should have the full freedom to live, work and raise families where they saw fit was a radical one, unsupported by most political structures and ideologies. I also learned that migrants' affiliations with where they were from were more nuanced than I initially imagined. Many migrants whom I met wanted, as my grandparents did, to start anew in the place to which they migrated, while others viewed their migration destinations as a temporary fix, suited to improving their lives "back home". Still others fell somewhere in between, creating transnational lives that responded to, and sometimes challenged, the restrictive conditions that government-regulated labour recruitment programs placed on their ability to settle permanently in the receiving country.

A trip to Tel Aviv in 2006 solidified my interest in that context. I was attracted by the relative novelty of the Foreign Worker Program and the ways in which those charged with migration policy and enforcement were grappling, for the first time, with the longer-term effects of so-called temporary migrants settling more permanently. I was also intrigued by the ways in which Jewish citizens of Israel, the majority of whom are themselves migrants or the children or grandchildren of migrants (including my own extended family), were thinking about non-Jewish migration to the Jewish state and the politics of exclusion at play in the country's migration policy. I was also interested in participants in the Foreign Worker Program, especially their motivations for migrating to Israel and their experiences as non-citizens whose labour is so actively recruited while their settlement is so actively prevented.

While my project was initially constructed around migrant caregivers and the elderly citizens for whom they cared in the northern city of Haifa, the explosion of the deportation debate in Tel Aviv, as well as my personal interest in activism and advocacy organizations based there, pulled me toward that city. This geographic reorientation also shifted my focus from labour migration as a response to the aging of the Jewish population of Israel (particularly evident in Haifa), to labour migration as the catalyst for the birth of a new non-Jewish population of Israel.

### **What I did, where, when and how**

I carried out fieldwork over the course of thirteen non-consecutive months in Tel Aviv, Israel between August 2009 and January 2011 and then subsequently returned, in

July 2012, for a brief visit. My primary method of investigation was participant observation. I thus engaged in activities with the aim of studying what people did, as much as what they said, or what they said they did. To this end, I attended numerous public events including protests, marches and political meetings as well as performances, fundraisers, holiday parties and church services. I was present in the private homes of migrants and Israelis as they went about their everyday lives as well as when they celebrated or marked special events.

I therefore had rich, informal conversations with dozens of migrants, service providers, activists, artists, academics, teachers, child-care workers, politicians and store and restaurant owners. I recorded these conversations and interactions as fieldnotes. I also conducted and audio-recorded formal, semi-structured interviews with sixteen migrants and four migrants' rights advocates. While anyone who knew me as more than an acquaintance in the field was aware of my research interests, I refrained from formalizing the majority of my interactions with migrants and advocates and did not ask them to sign consent forms and/or to allow me to make audio recordings of their interviews. I did this for two main reasons. First, recording voices and asking for signatures can frighten (and perhaps have adverse effects) on illegalized people who, by virtue of their lack of status, engage in activities that are deemed "illegal" on a day-to-day basis. I therefore only recorded interviews with migrants with whom I had had substantial prior contact, and only in cases where they explicitly expressed feeling comfortable with having their voices recorded. Even such migrants did not give their full names on the recording, nor did they sign any documents. This informality made both me, and the interviewees, more

comfortable. It allowed me to ask sensitive questions, and it allowed interviewees to share information that might be incriminating in other contexts.

Second, and in a related vein, I observed that journalists and documentary filmmakers frequently approached migrants whom I knew, asking them to give interviews about various aspects of their lives. The public profile of the deportation debate was so high during my fieldwork, and people who had lost their legal status were so inundated with requests for interviews at that time, that demonstrations and special events sometimes took the form of informal press conferences. I often found the behaviour of reporters in these circumstances aggressive, invasive and potentially dangerous for migrants, particularly considering the fraught nature of the political situation. I also quickly began to notice that reporters were likely to get responses from migrants that were rehearsed rather than spontaneous. My sparing use of a voice recorder was therefore an attempt to distinguish myself from reporters and to give due respect both to migrants and to the nuanced natures of their stories.

### **Research sites and points of departure**

Over the course of my fieldwork, most of my observations were gathered as I worked as a volunteer in four different sites and as I took on numerous, informed roles. In the following sections, I outline these sites and roles, describing the ways in which I came to conduct this part of my research.



### Physicians for Human Rights

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that has provided medical assistance, individual assistance and advocacy services to “marginalized and oppressed populations” in Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories since 1988. PHR’s Open Clinic, one of a variety of initiatives, was established to make healthcare available to anyone without the necessary means to receive such services. Doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other medical practitioners and most administrative staff, work on a voluntary basis. During my fieldwork, the majority of patients attending the clinic, which operated four days a week out of a small office in Jaffa, were African asylum seekers. Clients also included “foreign workers” whose employers did not provide them with health insurance, illegalized migrant workers and illegalized Palestinian workers.

I volunteered at PHR’s Open Clinic from October of 2009 to May of 2010 in response to one of the clinic’s calls to recruit new volunteers for its reception desk. When I came across such a call, I approached the office to ask what would be involved in working at the clinic. After a brief tour of the space, the volunteer co-ordinator at the time (herself a volunteer), asked me if I could begin working that same day. I would train on the job. From that day forward, I worked one four to six-hour shift a week on Monday evenings. As Monday was the day for specialists (and not the general physician), my duties included managing the appointment list and receiving and interacting with the patients in the waiting room. I was also responsible, with one to three other volunteers (although the specific people were rarely consistent), for pulling patient’s files, managing

and interpreting doctors' additions to those files, filling out forms for referrals to other institutions and doctors, making appointments for patients, and explaining to patients how they could get to and from appointments. There was some effort made to ensure that the reception staff spoke at least English, Hebrew, and Arabic. However, translation services were generally inadequate at the clinic and much of the time communication with patients (a large percentage of whom spoke only Amharic or Tigrinya) was extremely difficult. As I was usually the only volunteer who spoke Spanish, I also came to translate for patients both inside and outside the private consultation room.

#### La Escuelita

*La Escuelita* (the "little school") was an educational program for children established by Latino migrants (both legalized and illegalized) in Tel Aviv. In its ninth year in 2009, La Escuelita had been operating as a program through which the children of Latino migrants could receive help on Mondays and Wednesdays with the homework they brought home from their day schools, and could learn the Spanish language and "Latin American culture" on Fridays. The teachers on Fridays were volunteers with various professional, ethnic and national backgrounds. In 2009, the majority of teachers were Israeli Jews who had migrated to Israel from countries in Latin America. There were approximately eight teachers who regularly attended meetings and gave classes.

While student enrollment had been much higher in the past, there were about ten to twenty students who regularly attended classes at La Escuelita in 2009. The program had originally been an initiative of the Latino migrant community in Tel Aviv, but

because of deportations from within this community, intra-community conflict, and the desire of children and their parents to participate in other activities, the school was suffering a "crisis" in the year that I entered as a volunteer.

Nevertheless, classes ran from October to May of that year. My responsibilities were to lead a class (with one other volunteer) of five and six-year-olds. At various points in the year, there were only two children in the class, while at others there were five or six. I was also called upon on many occasions to help with the older class. Besides planning and teaching classes, I also attended organizational meetings, parent-teacher meetings, visioning sessions (intended to determine the direction and long-term goals of the organization), and fundraising events in which the children participated. My involvement with La Escuelita also led to my participation in a variety of Latino community events for holidays, social outings or, on a few occasions, fundraisers for individuals and families who had turned to the community for support in times of financial need.

#### Translator and companion

Because of my involvement with members of the Latino community in Tel Aviv, I also worked steadily as a translator (from Spanish to Hebrew or Spanish to English) for individuals and couples on an as-needed basis. This was not an official volunteer role (the hours were not fixed, and I had no supervision or institutional affiliation). It was, however, something that I spent a great deal of my time doing. People whom I met, or who had heard of me through friends, would call me to meet them at government

ministries, hospitals and health centres, and/or in meetings with lawyers, social service agents, doctors or nurses. I accompanied four women through pregnancy, birth and post-natal discharges from the hospital. I became familiar through this process with Tel Aviv's two main hospitals, The Sourasky Medical Center (known as Ichilov) and The Wolfson Medical Center.

I also regularly accompanied women to medical appointments at a prenatal health centre in the south of Tel Aviv. *Tipat Chalav* (literally a “drop of milk”) was a municipally-funded health centre in which prenatal check-ups and care were offered to women free of charge. These centres existed all over the city, but I was only familiar with two, both in the south of Tel Aviv, where the majority of migrants lived. The centres served women only in their catchment areas, requiring an address at the time of registration. The medical section of the centre at which I spent most of my time (there was also a social service section) was staffed by two nurses, an assistant or student nurse, an administrative nurse, a receptionist, and a gynecologist who came for a prescribed number of hours each Monday morning. I would meet with women who were pregnant in the waiting room of the health centre, and translate for them during their appointments with both the nurses and doctors. Later in my research, I spent time at a second *Tipat Chalav* – a smaller office dedicated to healthcare for infants and babies.

### Israeli children

Israeli Children was an activist group that developed during the summer of 2009 as a direct response to the announcement that children of illegalized migrant workers

would be deported from Israel. Its goal was to organize a popular movement to stop the deportation. The group was founded by four women in their twenties, all of whom had been involved in migrant activism, advocacy or service in some form prior to the announcement of the deportation order. In its earliest stages, it was connected to Mesila, a municipally-funded migrant service agency in Tel Aviv. Its meetings were held in Mesila's office space and members located their movement under the banner of other activities carried out by this service agency. However, Israeli Children soon distinguished itself as a grassroots movement that was unaffiliated in any sustained financial or political way with Mesila, or any other, specific group.

Volunteer members were defined by their participation on the group's listserves – one for organizing and the other for general announcements – and in the group's outings with children, and its promotional activities. Israeli Children also developed a Facebook page, whose 'friend' list grew steadily over the course of the year, where information and promotional materials were disseminated. There were also in-person meetings that were called as needed to organize a party, fundraiser or demonstration or to advertise these events. A core group of about ten to fifteen people regularly attended meetings and participated on the organizing listserve. The majority were Israeli citizens, and a few were migrants.

In my capacity as a volunteer and organizer with Israeli Children, I attended meetings, participated in discussions on the listserve, and contributed to promoting the group's events. I also attended all demonstrations as well as several events in which the children were invited to participate as guests. At these events, I watched the children,

helped facilitate their participation in activities, and generally acted as an extra adult supervisor who could make sure children were safe and entertained. For a period of a few months, I also participated in the planning of a fundraising party to support the group's activities.

#### Social activities and friendships

I draw on many of my experiences volunteering in the pages that follow. Working with migrants and their allies in the fields of healthcare, education, and political activism gave me a broad perspective on the central issue of this thesis – the politics of intimacy. This volunteer work, however, was also a process through which I met and befriended many migrants such that a different kind of participant observation became possible. My life as a researcher was therefore inseparable from my social life and from the friendships which I developed with individuals in Tel Aviv. I spent weeks regularly going to a kindergarten that was being run out of the home of a South Asian couple whom I had befriended. They had me over to play with the children, help with special programs, join them at official kindergarten meetings and social events, or simply come for dinner. I spent considerable time with a circle of friends from Burma whose birthday parties, holiday meals, political rallies and social gatherings filled my weekends. Close friendships with couples and women from Ecuador and Peru gave me the special opportunity to attend baby showers, births and baptisms. Friends also took me to hospitals, social service agencies, and ministries where I helped translate and fill out

forms. Finally, my contact with some of Tel Aviv's Filipino migrants brought me to numerous religious and community festivals, birthdays, house-warmings and dances.

All of these moments and events contributed to opportunities that I had throughout the research for understanding the lives of migrants in Tel Aviv. They were also, however, rich personal experiences, bringing me into very close contact with people who engaged me emotionally and intellectually. I came to trust, depend upon and care deeply for a few people with whom I had a particularly close bond. I can only hope that my appreciation and respect for them, and for our relationships, has come through in some parts of the analysis that I've created in this dissertation.

At the same time, my inter-personal engagements also put me in difficult positions with some individuals and groups. I have taken these moments too, including "ruptures of communication" (Rabinow 1997:154), and sometimes unpleasant emotional entanglements, as opportunities to think about and understand the politics of intimacy. I've continued, in this respect, a tradition in anthropology to mine the researcher's personal experiences for their relevance to the ethnography (see Crapanzano 1985 and Clifford and Marcus 1986 for elaborations on this tradition) and to assess the "productive discomforts" (Hertzfeld 1996:41) which can inhere in them.

### **Process and pitfalls:**

#### **An insider from the outside looking at outsiders from the inside**

Just as illegalized migrants in Tel Aviv were implicated in a politics of intimacy with state and government institutions and expectations, so was I. As a temporary resident of Israel, I was situated in a complex, if not similarly intimate, engagement with the

structures and ideologies of Israeli life. I therefore saw my own temporary migration to Israel, and my movement within the country, as part of the research itself. Specifically, I came to question my own position as a Jewish woman living and working in Tel Aviv. Far from being a sideline issue to labour migration, reflections on what it meant to be a “diaspora Jew” in Israel were directly related to the politics that framed the Foreign Worker Program and migration to Israel more generally. As such, my entry into the field and my ability to establish contacts was inevitably and even constantly affected by my being a North American Jew with relatives in Israel and the capacity (through the Law of Return) to acquire the citizenship status that is so coveted and so out of reach for the non-Jewish migrants with whom I worked and socialized. Put simply, in doing research on this topic, I became an insider from the outside studying outsiders from the inside.

For reasons previously explained, the insider/outsider and citizen/non-citizen dichotomies in Israel have been especially significant in the country’s development. They represent a host of practical, everyday experiences that are felt by people on all sides of these dichotomies. My own experiences arranging a long-term study visa at the Ministry of the Interior in Jerusalem provided some of the initial moments in which I realized exactly how much my positionality would “give me traction” (Povinelli 2006:22) in making sense of citizenship, (il)legality and belonging in this context. To be brief about a process that was anything but brief, each time I returned to the Ministry to extend my B2 visa, a process that I was assured would be simple as long as I had a letter from the university, I encountered numerous hassles. Each time I was also asked directly by Ministry personnel why *I* was ‘complicating matters’ by not simply making *aliyah* (that



is, immigrating to Israel and obtaining automatic citizenship through the Jewish Law of Return). These experiences highlighted a commonly-held Israeli attitude toward my reluctance to make aliyah. I came to realize that, for most Israelis with whom I came into contact, basic assumptions were at play. Because Jewish migrants *could* become citizens, they *should* become citizens and, further, they *would* invariably want to do so. By the same token, non-Jewish migrants who couldn't become citizens, shouldn't do so. And while they might want to, this desire was suspect and ran contrary to accepted norms.

As a country in which approximately one in three citizens are foreign born, Israelis are never far away from the actual experience of migration, nor from frank discussions of migration politics. Both casual and serious conversations that I had with Israelis would inevitably go beyond the obvious questions of how I had gotten to Israel and what I was studying to whether or not I planned to make aliyah and, in many cases, if I was planning on finding a husband with whom to settle down. Outright questions about my religion (and its connection to my potential future in Israel) surprised me at first, because my experience in Canada had taught me that religion was a private matter, not often discussed in public or with strangers. But the question of my Jewishness, and of how this might affect my life, were prominent features of my research encounters from beginning to end.

My uncommon position as a non-citizen Jew elicited conversations that were sometimes amusing and sometimes worrisome – the latter particularly on the two occasions in which I tried to cross the border into Egypt and was assumed, unfavourably, to be an Israeli citizen trying to travel illegally on a foreign passport. These conversations

were always great fodder for analysis. Bureaucrats and security guards would ask for my *teudat zehut* (Israeli identification document), for example, and on finding out that I didn't have one, would suggest to me without hesitation that aliyah was the most sensible option for "someone like you". Friends and family, especially those who had to listen to my complaints about onerous trips to the Ministry, also questioned why I wouldn't just spend the same amount of energy on obtaining citizenship as I had already spent on securing a visa. Moreover, unlike a visa, aliyah wouldn't expire, and would come with a number of benefits including tax exemptions and a monthly cash allowance.

The clear and present knowledge that all of the illegalized migrants whom I knew were in desperate need of, and yet not eligible for, these benefits (not to mention the legalized status that underlay them), made me balk at the thought of receiving them. In the end I persisted (and succeeded) in getting an extension of my B2 visa, a process that included yet another Ministry official checking a database to make sure that my mother had not obtained citizenship and passed it on to me automatically when she had temporarily lived in Israel nearly forty years earlier. My final decision to avoid obtaining citizenship was an easy one. Besides having my dissertation research at the forefront of my mind, I also had a number of serious concerns about the past and present politics of the Israeli government. Moreover, I was exposed on so many occasions to Israel's defence of deportation, which was phrased in the language of saving the country and its resources for Jews like me, that I couldn't help but feel as though being included, and so vigorously encouraged to solidify that inclusion, made me directly responsible for those who were excluded, migrants as well as Palestinians and Bedouins. I came to see that my

right to become an insider was being used as one justification for policing the borders to outsiders.

### **Gaining trust in the midst of uncertainty**

Alongside the significance of the hypothetical choice I had to make about aliyah were the ways in which this insiderness affected my relationships with (outsider) migrants whose trust and friendship I hoped to gain. In a description of his fieldwork with foreign workers and “undocumented people” in Tel-Aviv, Kalir described his Israeli citizenship as a barrier to establishing trust among informants who initially did not understand why an Israeli would be interested in “foreign workers” and who suspected that he might work for deportation authorities and/or “turn them in” to the police (2006:239). Later, as Kalir developed rapport with the people who participated in his research, his citizenship was once again a topic of interest, this time for illegalized migrant women who saw the potential to gain citizenship status by marrying an Israeli man (2006:243). Indeed, Kalir’s experiences apparently are not unique among anthropologists in a variety of contexts, especially for those who are citizens working with illegalized migrants (see Chavez 1997, De Genova 2005).

My own encounters in the field were slightly different than those of Kalir and others given the fact that I did not have Israeli citizenship. Nor had I ever lived and worked in Israel for any sustained period of time. Instead, it was my potential rather than actual Israeli citizenship that highlighted power differentials between myself and my migrant informants. While I usually made a point of stating that I was *not* Israeli to

migrants, despite the fact that my physical appearance and facility with Hebrew suggested otherwise, people's reactions rarely matched my expectations. When migrants found out that I was foreign and also Jewish, they were not mistrusting or suspicious, but rather curious, wondering where I had come from and what I was doing in Israel.

More generally though, my Canadian citizenship and identity, became important markers of status and difference as I interacted with migrants. More than a few times, a man who found out that I was a Canadian would ask me immediately if I had a boyfriend; if I was interested in having a boyfriend from the particular country he was from; or if I wanted to give him my phone number so that we could meet again. It was in these cases that I realized how much appeal my passport carried and, in a more general sense, how complex the intersections were among citizenship, gender and power. Later in the fieldwork, I was asked by Peter, a Nigerian man whom I had known for several months but who had only recently realized that I was from Canada, if I could arrange a marriage for him with a Canadian friend who might be looking for "a nice African man". While I mainly interacted with Peter as a result of my work in the clinic where I was a receptionist, administrator and general gatekeeper and where he was a patient perpetually waiting for the attentions of the doctor, he never seemed as vulnerable to me as he did at the moment in which he asked me to find him a Canadian wife. Peter was a large and physically striking man, and he always carried himself with considerable dignity and strength. When he asked me to find him a wife the first time it was in the midst of one of our casual conversations at the clinic. He laughed after he said it as though it was a joke. But there was also a desperation and a seriousness to the request, and when he reminded

me as he left the clinic to “keep my eyes open” for him, I recognized a change in our interpersonal dynamic.

Women and married men were also interested in my Canadian citizenship for reasons that were less immediately explicit. I learned rather quickly that many people who come to Israel through the Foreign Worker Program do so with the hopes that they could finish a contract in Israel and parlay that into a placement in Canada’s Live-in Caregiver Program. While there are no established or formal links between these two contracts, most migrants assumed that their Israeli experience would make them more attractive candidates for employment in Canada. Filipina women, in particular, had heard of others who had taken this route and were interested in getting my contact information both in Israel and Canada should they need it in the future. I readily gave this information and informed people of an agency I had heard of in Toronto that recruits Filipina caregivers from Israel to work in the homes of Canadian Jews who consider knowledge of Hebrew an asset in selecting child-care workers. I was aware, however throughout my fieldwork, that there was little I could do (besides hiring someone myself) to facilitate women’s acceptance to Canada’s Live-in Caregiver Program.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter I have presented the theoretical and methodological foundations for my study of the politics of intimacy. First, I reviewed the emergent literature on migrant mothers, exploring how illegalized migrant mothers in particular, powerfully shape, and are shaped by, the discourse and policies of the places in which they live. This is because

illegalized migrant mothers constitute a unique kind of migrant, namely one that is cast by the welfare state as simultaneously vulnerable and threatening. Second, I proposed that the literature on intimacy can frame both migrant mothers' relationship to the structures and ideologies of the countries in which they live, and the dualistic nature of this relationship. Using Stoler's scholarship on the "tense and tender ties" of colonial rule, I have argued that intimacy must be understood as intricately related to the practices of domination. As such, the politics of intimacy produce what I've called intimate conditions that are paradoxical in that they seem contradictory are, in fact, internally coherent. Third, I have described the ways in which I situated myself as a researcher in the field – where I conducted research, with whom, and how. Indeed, my own entanglements in Israeli bureaucracies and socio-cultural expectations provide an initial example of the politics of intimacy in this context. In Parts II and III of the thesis, I elaborate on these politics ethnographically, focusing on the experiences and actions of illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011.

## Part II

*Nu?*

### **An introduction to the ethnographic chapters**

In Part I of the thesis I described the lay of the land, setting a scene in empirical, theoretical and conceptual terms for the research that I present and the analytical narrative that I will build, in the pages that follow. I've situated my study temporally, in the history of migration and belonging in the State of Israel; geographically, in Israel's largest urban centre, Tel Aviv; and intellectually, in anthropological and sociological bodies of literature on migration. I've suggested that the "politics of intimacy" is a useful framework for exploring the relationship between illegalized migrant women and the structures and ideology of the societies to which they migrate, specifically in cases in which these women become pregnant and give birth in such "receiving" countries. I have also, in clarifying terminology, explored the complexity of the migrant worker's position in the receiving country and introduced a key issue in the literature on migration.

Part II of the thesis is thus a response to the common Israeli expression, *nu*, meaning "go on", "and then what happened?" or "so what?" *Nu* is a request for more information, interjected into conversations as a way to encourage the speaker to continue or to demand that he or she get to the heart of the matter. In this section, I do just that, explaining how the politics of intimacy work on the ground, specifically how they have created and perpetuated conditions of intimacy that have defined illegalized migrant women's lives in Tel Aviv between 2009 and 2011. I focus on the stories that women have told me and on the everyday activities and actions that I observed as a researcher in

this context. I also use literatures in the field of migration studies – including deportability, migrants’ access to medical services, migrant performance and activism, migrant domestic work, etc. – to highlight aspects of these stories and to draw out themes that emerge from them.



### CHAPTER THREE: PERMANENT TEMPORARINESS

“[The Israeli government] thought that if they deported the fathers the mother will take the child and go with him. But that is not what happened. Now she has to stay here for longer. If there are two together they can stay less time. Every time they think they are doing something to solve the problem, they are making people stay longer.”

(Edgar, illegalized migrant father from Nigeria)

“...[T]here is an iron law of labor immigration:  
there is nothing more permanent than temporary workers”

(Martin, 1994:86)

In his exploration of “Guest Worker” programs in the United States, Philip Martin pointed out the faulty assumption on which these programs are based, namely, that migrants will go home when their work contract is finished. Martin explains how persistent economic and political problems in “sending” countries mean that it is much more likely, and indeed has been documented, that individual migrant workers choose to remain (without legal status) in the country where they can earn a living wage. At the same time, “receiving” economies have come to rely on the low-wage and easily disposable labour power that temporary or illegalized workers provide. These programs thus exacerbate the problem that they were designed to solve. While the “side door” option of labour migration programs was initially developed as an alternative to “backdoor” practices of outright illegal entry, the two doors have often led to the same place as migrants, who have passed through both, have come to settle together in a state of being permanently temporary – and illegalized – residents of the receiving country (1994:86).

In this chapter, I use Martin's observations of labour migration programs to introduce some key issues surrounding so-called temporary migration to Israel during 2009-2011. As Edgar's above-cited comment suggests, I do so in light of newly-relevant aspects of migrant settlement in Tel Aviv in particular, namely that migrants have had children in this receiving country and that successive Israeli governments have made concerted efforts to prevent the long-term settlement of these so-called migrant families. I ask how the birth of children in Tel Aviv, as well as related processes of illegalization, deportation and treatment in the workplace, have impacted on the ways in which migrants have imagined, planned and/or enacted forms of temporary, permanent or permanently temporary settlement in Israel. What factors contributed to migrants' decision to have children in this receiving country: when, with whom and under what conditions? How did they decide how long to stay in Israel, with or without their children? And how did such decisions and strategies, in turn, affect migrants' interactions with employers, government bureaucrats, law enforcement officers, medical personnel and other migrants?

In exploring these questions, I am also describing the interplay between permanence and temporariness as a foundational aspect of the politics of intimacy as they developed in this context. Specifically, I describe how Israeli state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic practices and socio-cultural expectations have shaped women's decisions and strategies regarding the period of time they stay in Israel. I also show how women's decisions and strategies have responded to, challenged and altered Israeli conventions and practices on the matter of how long migrants are allowed or expected to stay in Tel Aviv. I demonstrate how the dialectical relationship between

Israeli structures and ideologies on the one hand, and the ways in which migrants choose to live their lives on the other, has played out in the “intimate domains” of “sex, sentiment, child rearing and domestic arrangement” (Stoler 2001:1). I look at how this has produced an intimate condition, in this case a state of temporal limbo, which I refer to as permanent temporariness.

I borrow the title of this chapter and the idea of permanent temporariness from Bailey, Wright, Mountz and Miyares whose research on Salvadorians living in New Jersey has named and highlighted this condition (2002:139). The authors describe how the legal category of Temporary Protective Status, defined by a distinctive visa that gives the holder amnesty from deportation for a limited period of time, has created a population of people who live in a state of legal and temporal liminality. According to Bailey et al., permanent temporariness constitutes a “way of being, a kind of space of action” within which migrants experience and also challenge such liminality through their engagements in the public realm (2002:139).

My own ethnography begins to describe this space of action in Tel Aviv through the stories of two illegalized migrant mothers: Estella, a migrant from Ecuador who became pregnant, gave birth and lost her legal status in 2010, and Janet, a migrant from the Philippines who became pregnant, gave birth, lost her legal status in 2001, and became active in the anti-deportation campaign of 2009 when her son was one of the 1,200 children who were slated for deportation. I weave these women’s stories together with those of other migrant mothers and fathers whose experiences with pregnancy, child-

birth and child-rearing describe the politics of intimacy and the intimate condition of permanent temporariness that emerged out of them in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011.

**“Baby or visa”: From legal worker to illegalized mother –  
Estella and Janet**

Estella’s difficult choice

When I was left alone with Estella, sitting on the edge of her hospital bed just ten hours after she had given birth, it was only the second time we had ever met. It was Jorge, her boyfriend and the father of her baby, whom I had known for several months and who had asked me to come that morning to help the couple translate from Hebrew to Spanish and to navigate the hospital system after the birth of their first child. Estella was a 27-year-old woman, originally from a farm in Ecuador’s southernmost province of Loja. She had been in Tel Aviv for just two years working as a caregiver for two different employers. She told me that moving away from home had made her nervous at first but that, because she was young, unmarried and unable to find good work near the farm, working abroad seemed like the best option. Jorge was a few years older than Estella and had been in Tel Aviv for almost nine years. He was born in Colombia but had been travelling to find work since his early twenties, and had met Estella’s brother while working for a few years as a gold miner in Ecuador. Jorge and Estella met on her brother’s recommendation. Estella had been new in Tel Aviv and felt lonely for home, so her brother contacted Jorge and arranged for the two to get to meet. Since then, the couple had spent almost every one of Estella’s weekly days off together.

It was when Jorge left the hospital room to look for some lunch that the usually reserved Estella began to speak to me quietly about the pressure that she was feeling from Moises, the Argentinian-Israeli owner of her employment agency. She told me that from the moment that Moises had discovered that she was pregnant, already well into her second term, he had explained to her that she would have to “make a choice”. Either Estella could stay in Israel without the baby, or she could leave with him. If she chose to stay with the baby, Moises told her that he would not be able to find her any more employment. Estella would lose her work visa, would become “illegal” and would have to find her own employers and negotiate her own salary and hours. Estella confided to me that she had found it almost impossible to think about anything else through the last stages of her pregnancy – a point underscored by Jorge’s recent phone calls to me asking if I could please “make her less nervous”. Still, despite all the thinking and worrying, now that the baby was born, Estella was still not sure what she should or would do.

Scholarly research on illegalized migrants has explored the ways in which legality is not static for people like Estella and Jorge. Just as Martin observed the entrance of migrants through various doors, others have shown how migrants enter countries in authorized ways and then travel along well-worn “routes” (Black et al. 2006) or “pathways” (Goldring et al. 2009) that lead them to lose their legalized status. In Israel, the transformation from having precarious or temporary legal status to having no legal status – that is, being illegalized – was nowhere more dramatic than in the regulation that has been known colloquially as “baby or visa”. This regulation, organized around the principle that workers migrate to Israel without family and, therefore, will only stay

temporarily, stipulated that women who were employed in Israel with an FWP work visa would lose this visa 90 days after they had given birth. The woman had the option of retaining her visa and her legalized status by sending the baby out of the country, but if the mother and child stayed together in Israel they were both without legal status (illegalized) and both subject to deportation at any time.<sup>17</sup>

As such, the “baby or visa” regulation, as well as related processes such as the head of the employment agency communicating to Estella her need to “make a choice”, highlight three important aspects of the operations of the politics of intimacy in this context. First, the choice in question attests to the personally intimate nature of these politics. Having to make this choice caused Estella nervousness, distress, sleepless nights and tension with Jorge both throughout her pregnancy and after the baby was born. Estella was thus deeply engaged with the Israeli state and government in all of the “intimate domains” of “sex, sentiment, child-rearing and domestic arrangement” (Stoler 2001:1). Her story demonstrates some of the ways in which the relationship between illegalized women and the Israeli state and government was founded on, and perpetuated by, the play of politics in women’s most personal moments and actions.

Second, “baby or visa” illustrates the interdependent nature of the politics of intimacy; that is, the on-going and intensive relationship between illegalized women and

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<sup>17</sup> During the writing of this thesis, the “baby or visa” regulation was overturned. In a controversial ruling reported on April 13, 2011, Supreme Court Justice Ayala Procaccia voided the Interior Ministry regulation that migrant workers would stand to lose their visas 90 days after giving birth. Citing both local employment equity laws which prevent discrimination against pregnant women and mothers, and international agreements calling for the protection of migrant workers’ rights, Procaccia stated that both options in the “baby or visa” regulation “violate [migrant womens’] constitutional right for parenthood and harm her financial prospects severely” (Procaccia quoted in Glickman, 2011)

the Israeli state and government that developed through these politics. Estella's decisions regarding having a baby, keeping her baby with her and, as will become apparent below, engaging in a conjugal relationship with Jorge, were made in direct response to, and with clear knowledge of, the ways in which these decisions would position her vis-à-vis the Israeli state, government and labour market. Specifically, she knew that having a baby, keeping the baby and raising the baby with Jorge would change her status in Israel from a "legal" worker to an "illegal" mother. In other words, Estella and other women like her were constantly aware of how their choices in managing these aspects of their lives had implications well beyond the immediate. They thus came to view these "intimate domains" as sites from which they could potentially respond to, and challenge, the state and government.

Third, Estella's story shows the intimate conditions that emerge from the politics of intimacy in this context. Namely, paradoxical conditions that are constituted by two or more features that seem contradictory or oppositional, but are in fact interdependent. In this case, "baby or visa" represents the mutual reinforcement of migrant permanence and migrant temporariness in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011. While it was overturned in 2011 (arguably moved through the courts at that time as a result of the publicity surrounding the anti-deportation campaign), "baby or visa" was in many ways a foundational element of the FWP, with its goal of importing workers whose lack of family obligations would reinforce their flexibility in the workforce and their temporariness in the country. Yet, by its very existence, "baby or visa" also demonstrated that government's claim to migrant temporariness has never been accurate. Indeed, the regulation was established to address

the thousands of migrant women who have settled and had children in Israel, and in Tel Aviv in particular. These women have planned to stay in the city permanently despite, and in some cases as a result of, becoming illegalized.

#### Janet's failed strategy

Janet's story also demonstrates these three aspects of the politics of intimacy, and alludes to some of the ways in which these politics operated for hundreds of other migrant women who had become pregnant well before Estella even arrived in Tel Aviv. While Estella had her son Emmanuel in June of 2010 as the deportation debate was in full swing, the decision that she faced in the first three months of his birth was one that most of the migrant mothers of the 1,200 children had faced a decade earlier. These women, like Estella, had come to Israel with caregiver visas, issued through the Ministry of the Interior and valid for up to 63 months. Like Estella, they had become pregnant, received varying forms of pre-natal care and given birth in Israeli hospitals. These women also had decided to keep their children with them and had lost their work visas as a result of this decision. Several years later, they were still living in Israel, mobilizing a campaign against the Israeli government to fight for residency rights for their children.

Janet was one of these women. I came to know her and her 8-year-old son, Francisco, through their consistent work in the anti-deportation campaign. Janet's initial decisions – to be open with her employers and to send her baby back to the Philippines within the required 90-day period – should have allowed her a stable future of working legally in Tel Aviv. Her status as a temporary worker, however, and the ways in which



that temporariness was emphasized through her pregnancy, contributed to sealing her fate in a way she had not expected.

When I asked Janet if she had always wanted children, she laughed as though it was a ridiculous question. “Of course I want children, that’s why I got married”. Still, upon meeting her future husband, a migrant worker from Thailand who had given up his agricultural-worker visa in order to take up unauthorized employment in restaurants in Tel Aviv, Janet did not take the decision to get pregnant lightly. Instead, she first approached her employers and asked them what they thought about her future plans with her new boyfriend. At the time, Janet had been working for the same people for seven years and described them as being “very good to her”. She attributed her openness with them to the solid personal relationship she felt that she had established over time. “I liked this employer and didn’t want to have any trouble with them”.

The employers responded as she had expected and hoped they would, telling her that it was “only natural” for her to want these things in life and that they were happy to pay for private insurance throughout her pregnancy. They decided that she would continue working with them until her seventh month, after which she could take some time off, send her child to the Philippines, and eventually return to work “when she was ready”.

Janet told the story of her decision to send her baby back to the Philippines as though it were an obvious one. Her salary was good in Israel and was financing her ‘brothers’ and sisters’ college educations. Since staying would be more practical, and since she did not want to live in Israel illegally, Janet told me that it was clear to her that she

should keep the work visa and send her baby son home, especially since she was lucky to have a mother who would be able to care for him in the Philippines. Janet told me that she knew that it was only by staying in Israel that she would be able to provide him with all the things he would want in life.

After she had the baby in a Tel Aviv hospital, Janet and her husband took off a few months to spend with him. In the third month, they sent some of his favourite toys and baby furniture to the Philippines so that the transition would be easier on him and so that “it would all be ready when he got there”. Janet arranged to have a friend take him on the plane and deliver him safely to her mother’s home.

But two days before her son’s flight, Janet’s employers called her to say that they had found another *metapelet* (caregiver) and that Janet could not come back since they had transferred the work visa that had been assigned to them to the other Filipina woman. Janet was out of a job, but she was in time to keep her son with her. She described that moment as one in which she realized how much she wanted to keep Francisco with her. “Lucky for me that I didn’t send Francisco back. Because if I send him...I am working and I am also hiding. I was supposed to send him back to my mother, but when they called me that I cannot come back anymore so I decided then to work [illegally] as a cleaner in different places.”

Janet explained to me that once she knew that Francisco would stay with her, she also decided that she needed to make more money to be able to support him in the increasingly expensive city of Tel Aviv. Consequently, she began to plan a longer-term stay in the city, strenghtening her personal contacts at church and among other Filipina

women and becoming involved with other illegalized mothers as she began to re-evaluate her needs and desires as an illegalized migrant in Tel Aviv.

**Deportability and disposability:  
Migrant precariousness on two related fronts**

Even though Janet's story is unusual, it took place within a legal and social framework that was built around the unpredictability and vulnerability which inhere in the condition of permanent temporariness. First, the fact that Janet was fired at the last minute, and unexpectedly left without work, highlighted the ways in which it was the condition of "deportability" (De Genova 2002, 2005; De Genova and Peutz 2010) which laid the groundwork for her life as a permanently temporary migrant. In his study of Mexican labour in the United States, De Genova noted that "It is *deportability*, and not deportation per se, that historically rendered Mexican labor to be a distinctly disposable commodity" (2002:247, original emphasis). This concept of deportability, for De Genova and others (Nijhawan 2005, Castañeda 2008, Khosravi 2009), has captured the experience, not of being deported, but of living day-to-day under the constant threat of deportation. Actual deportation need not occur, for the possibility of it, or an individual's susceptibility to it, to establish particular social relations and patterns of interaction. This is because while deportation is a singular event, deportability is a sustained way of being. It refers to the ever-present, permanent condition under which people deemed temporary must conduct their lives.

Second, Janet's experiences of being a deportable migrant was closely linked to her status as a disposable worker. Indeed, it was the fact that Janet was fired from her job,

and not the fact that she had a baby, that directly resulted in her losing her work visa and becoming illegalized. Janet was keenly aware that being thought of as disposable in the workplace had in fact enhanced her deportability. When she told me that she had tried to “avoid problems” by consulting as much as possible with her employers regarding her personal decisions and the effects that this might have on her job, she was referring to the problem of displeasing her employers and opening herself up to losing her job and her visa. Janet therefore stayed close to her employers, implicitly acknowledging and thus reinforcing her own vulnerability by asking their permission to get married. Estella, equally aware of how her job affected her legal status, but much less trusting of her employers, took the opposite route. She kept her employers at a distance, concealing her pregnancy for as long as possible to minimize the extent of her double disposability: as a temporary worker and as a pregnant woman.

Thus, while the two women took slightly different paths in their attempts to hold onto their legalized status, their goals and guiding principles were the same. Each was engaged in a constant battle against her own disposability in the labour market. And each justly understood this battle as the key to retaining legalized status. The experiences of both Janet and Estella therefore illustrate the mutually dependent relationship between deportability and workplace disposability. They further emphasize that this relationship is ever-present not just for individuals without legal status, but even for those who have a form of temporary legal status. While De Genova has referred to “deportable aliens” as individuals who are *already* illegalized and as such may be deported at any time, I argue

here that his observations also apply to the experiences of people whose legal status is precarious, in this case, people who are temporary workers.

In the following sections, I describe how even though the temporary legal status given to FWP workers was a legalized status that protected these workers from deportation, the very fact of their temporariness, and the meaning of temporariness in this context, nevertheless put workers in a vulnerable position of deportability that was nearly identical to that of having no legal status at all. Temporariness was therefore a permanent condition, both for migrants who had legalized status and for those who did not, as workers were perpetually in danger of having their contracts terminated and their legalized status revoked.

#### Standing in line to get in: Unfree labour and the ideal of temporariness

Try as they did, Estella and Janet were unlikely to have won their respective battles against labour market disposability. In exposing the paradox that there is “nothing more permanent than a temporary worker”, Martin’s phrasing also highlights the fundamental character of temporariness and temporary work programs, specifically, the entrenched nature of disposability or replaceability in these programs. His quote emphasizes the permanence of *a* temporary worker, highlighting that this could be *any* worker from a long line of would-be or potential workers. As is evident from Janet’s story and from the history and development of the FWP as described above, Israel’s migrant labour recruitment program has not only created the possibility of employing temporary and flexible workers, it has also cultivated an *ideal* of temporary and flexible work. That

is, the notion that workers are disposable and replaceable. If Palestinian workers are problematic politically, for example, then Thai workers can be brought in. If Thai workers are unsuitable for some labour sectors, then Filipina workers can be recruited. If a Filipina worker has a baby, then another can be selected from a list of those on the waiting list at a manpower agency.

The prevalence and power of an ideal of temporariness have been evident in a number of industrialized economies where migrant labour is recruited. Ethnographic accounts of labour migration in these contexts have described the perceptions, on the part of employers and employees alike, that there is an endless supply of workers who covet stable (if temporary) jobs in strong economies and are consequently “standing in line” to be considered for such work (see McLaughlin 2009). This perception is not unfounded. Ethnographers who explore sending as well as receiving contexts have demonstrated that would-be workers are indeed lining up and filling waiting rooms in labour recruitment agencies and government ministries around the world, hoping to be considered for temporary contracts (Constable 2007, Barber 2008, Liebelt 2011a). As Martin has also noted, the permanence of temporary workers is bolstered by mass unemployment in sending countries and by the willingness and eagerness on the part of would-be migrants to travel long distances for extended periods in order to find gainful employment.

This image of an endless supply of workers who are easily replaced and therefore disposable has had a major impact in receiving countries, including Israel, where the image has not only perpetuated the ideal of temporariness in the attitudes of individual employers (like Janet’s), but also in the basic structure of the FWP itself. For example,

FWP caregiver visas have always been issued to employers rather than to employees; and employers therefore have the singular capacity to either terminate or apply to extend these visas. This has clearly exacerbated the already uneven power relations between employer and employee. This regulation has put workers like Janet in the position of constantly proving themselves against potential others, behaving in compliant and docile ways, enduring abuse, neglect, and/or illegal behaviour in the hopes of holding onto their jobs and demonstrating their value to employers.

As Basok has observed about the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) in Canada, the vulnerability of temporary workers depends on their recruitment and employment as “unfree labour” not only unable to circulate freely in the labour market, but also unable to refuse employers’ demands for fear of having their contracts terminated and/or of being replaced by other workers (2002:4). While workers from Mexico and the Caribbean are legally allowed to leave their jobs at any time and to return to their countries of origin (significantly, at their own expense), they nevertheless feel strongly “compelled” (140) to stay until the end of their contracts and to be available for work 24 hours a day. This is a result of the the combination of structural and social factors – including living on their employers’ property, and being subject to employer evaluations at the end of every season – that fosters what I’ve called an ideal of temporariness.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Basok and others have described specific examples of workers’ unfreedom in this context. For example, agricultural workers’ depend on employers for room and board and for transportation to and from amenities and services. This has meant that workers are vulnerable to having their contracts terminated due to requests to see a doctor and/or employers’ knowledge of workers’ behaviour outside of work. This power imbalance is

Basok argues that unfree labour that is delivered on demand through the SAWP is, in fact, “structurally necessary” (4) in the agricultural industry because of the time-sensitive nature of seasonal harvests and the delicate quality of the crops. Only migrant workers who are precariously positioned in the receiving country, that is, those who are living in constant fear of losing their jobs, are suitable for this kind of labour. Unfreedom is therefore not an unfortunate consequence of programs through which migrants are recruited on a temporary basis. Rather, unfreedom is the very foundation and *raison d’etre* of these programs.

While the caregiving industry in Israel does not rely on just-in-time labour in the same way that the agricultural industry, caregiving has nevertheless been similarly dependent on the flexibility of workers and on their inability to refuse employers’ demands. Both are consequences of the pitting of *actual* workers in competition against an endless supply of *potential* workers. As Janet’s case has demonstrated, employers are disproportionately powerful within such a framework, able to change their minds on a whim and radically change the course of their employees’ lives in the process. Workers’ disposability in the workforce, bolstered by the ways in which they have been subject to an ideal of temporariness has, therefore, kept them in a perpetual state of deportability.

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perpetuated in the SAWP through an evaluation process whereby employers fill out forms that determine if workers will be “requested” to return to work for the following season. The prospect of receiving a negative evaluation, the consequences of which include being denied the right to return to work in Canada for the same or any other employer, acts as a powerful reminder to workers that they must comply with employers’ every demand. As such, the evaluation process disciplines workers throughout the season, even as this form of discipline is invisible most of the time (see Preibisch 2004, Binford 2009, McLaughlin 2009).



Being in the family way: The perceived threat of pregnancy and motherhood

While their stories attest to the links between deportability and disposability, Janet and Estella were not, in fact, average deportable residents and disposable workers. Rather, both Janet and Estella became pregnant while on contract, a condition that especially heightened both their disposability and their deportability. This is because pregnancy and motherhood were seen as a transgression of the ideal of temporariness. Both pregnancy and motherhood indicated a partial rejection of the worker compliance that an ideal of temporariness entailed, specifically that workers would be constantly and unquestioningly available to employers, that their attention would be undivided and thus focussed solely on their work and that they would have the facility to leave the country at a moment's notice without having to consider a child who's life had developed in Israel and would be tied to its institutions and social life. Writing in more abstract terms about migrant workers and fertility in Israel, Kemp and Golden explain how, in the moment in which the "ultimate foreigner" becomes a mother, "she undergoes a transformation within which she also becomes human, and as such, dangerous from the perspective of the law and lawmakers" (2007:286, my translation).

Indeed, when workers express aspects of their humanity that are not directly related to their working roles, as all the illegalized women whom I met did when they became pregnant, they are being inconsistent with the goals of the FWP and other temporary worker programs that seek to control all the possible variables related to workers' decision-making and behaviour. I add to Kemp and Golden's observations that workers' humanity, and all the unpredictable behaviour that goes along with it, also make

them dangerous from the perspective of employers and employment agencies. This is because it is in the interest of employers and employment agencies to control workers' temporality – that is, any aspect of how they manage their time – and not just their temporariness. Janet's case is instructive in explaining the specifics of how temporality is controlled.

Janet told me that she never knew for sure what had changed her employers' minds about keeping her on as a caregiver, and she was understandably distressed by what happened. She assumed that her former employers were worried about her new role as a mother taking over from her old role as a worker. She guessed that maybe they wondered if there would be enough care to go around, or if Janet would be too distracted by her own baby that she would put her work second. But this interpretation did not get to the heart of the matter. Hadn't Janet done everything to dispel these worries? By deciding to send Francisco home, Janet had already demonstrated her compliance with an ideal of temporariness. Using the "baby or visa" regulation as a guide, she had participated in engineering her own unfreedom, intending to eliminate local obligations to her own family that could have been a distraction from her job, thus retaining her value as a worker first, and as a human second.

Of course, the variable that Janet could *not* have eliminated by sending Francisco home was the question of when she would want to leave Israel to join him in the Philippines. Sending her son to the Philippines would ensure that, for the duration of her time in Israel, she would focus all her energy on working. However, having her new baby living elsewhere might have encouraged Janet to behave in unpredictable ways, perhaps

shortening her time as a worker in Israel and leaving unexpectedly or without much notice to her employers. Indeed, such an abrupt leave-taking was unlikely for Janet as for others. A large proportion of migrant workers in Israel, as elsewhere, migrate with one or more children in their home countries. I did not hear of a single case during my fieldwork of a migrant who had left her job in Israel unexpectedly in order to attend to her childcare duties “at home”. On the contrary, it seemed much more likely that a worker would miss or be absent for an event “at home” as a result of being committed to fulfilling her contract in Israel.

Unlikely as it was for her to leave unexpectedly, however, the prospect of Janet having immediate loyalties elsewhere, and/or the desire to break her contract abruptly as a result of these loyalties, was, first, a symbol of Janet’s control over her own temporality and, second, an expression of humanity that fell outside the realm of work. Although it was not possible to know Janet’s employers’ reasons for finding another caregiver – reasons that might have included a complex bundle of issues and sentiments – Janet assumed that, after seven years of employment, it was most likely that they were somehow threatened by the new developments in her life, namely, that she was now married and had a new baby at home.

Janet’s assumption highlights an interesting contradiction, particularly relevant to the visa program for caregivers. Workers in this program were hired on a strictly temporary basis, meaning that once their work was finished, and regardless of any future desire to remain in the country, they were not legally permitted to stay. However, a key element of the work of providing a consistent and personalized level of care for an

individual until his or her death involved the expectation that the employer should be in control of the worker's ability to stay longer than the original contract prescribed. Unlike the seasonal agricultural work of Basok's analysis, caregiving has no predictable temporal boundaries, and workers may be needed well after their original contracts have finished. Indeed, the only time-sensitive issue in caregiving is that those requiring care may live for years or decades after a caregiver is hired and well beyond the typical time allotted by a visa.<sup>19</sup> In Israel, the possibility of a caregiver needing to stay longer than the expected amount of time is acknowledged formally and is supported by legal avenues which, as noted in Chapter One, allow employers to apply for an extension of the visas of migrant caregivers if the individual being cared for has developed an attachment to a particular worker.

I argue that an employers' capacity to extend, as well as terminate, a worker's visa based on that employer's own needs and preferences, constitutes yet another way in which the ideal of temporariness was enforced in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011. This is because the ideal gave employers' maximum influence over migrants' decisions regarding all aspects of their temporality, including both their decision to stay and their decision to go. In this context, pregnancy and motherhood invited even more attempts at control on the parts of employers and employment agencies because becoming pregnant,

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<sup>19</sup> In Israel, a number of employers who hire live-in caregivers are not elderly but require full-time assistance because of physical disabilities unrelated to age or potential life span. While there is no concrete data that indicate the percentage of employers who are not elderly, several caregivers I knew were employed to care for people in middle age who could potentially live for decades. Considering mandatory army service and the prevalence of combat injuries, as well as the privatization of care services, it is probable that Israel has a relatively high proportion of such non-elderly employers.

as an overt expression of a worker's humanity, existed outside her obligations and role as a worker.

**Understanding the temporal paradox:  
Temporariness and permanence as mutually constitutive**

Pregnancy and motherhood were not the only expressions of workers' humanity that were suspicious or undesirable from the perspectives of employers, employment agencies and the law. As this section continues to follow the stories of Janet and Estella, I describe some ways in which workers responded to the ideal of temporariness, and to related restrictions on their mobility and freedom, by rooting themselves firmly in Tel Aviv society. Indeed, as is suggested by Janet's decision to stay in Israel as a result of, and not despite, having lost her status, temporariness and permanence are intricately connected. This nevertheless demonstrates the three aspects of the politics of intimacy previously mentioned: the personally intimate nature of the politics of intimacy; the interdependent nature of these politics; and the condition of permanent temporariness that emerges from these engagements with Israeli structures and ideologies.

Enforced temporariness and the crime of family in the first degree

Fears concerning migrants' expressions of humanity, as well as migrants' desires to remain in Israel permanently, were much more salient in the year of the anti-deportation campaign than they had been in the past. As such, Kemp and Golden's above statement – outlining the situation for migrants in Israel before 2007 and emphasizing that the moment the “ultimate foreigner becomes a mother” she becomes “dangerous from the

perspective of the law and lawmakers” – seems too muted to describe fully the situation in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011. For example, as a result of the heightened drama of the campaign, it could be said that it is well *before* the moment that a woman becomes a mother that she undergoes a significant transformation.

Furthermore, during 2009-2011, this transformation extended beyond the woman to include the baby’s father or the woman’s partner, while the “danger” inherent in this transformation caused a reaction in more than just the law and lawmakers. Indeed, it affected the behaviour of law enforcement agencies, the public, and the migrants themselves. From Estella’s story, and noting its relationship to high profile deportations that targeted pregnant women as well as married women and men, we see how temporariness had come to be enforced in these years and the ways in which women made decisions in light of these trends.

I didn’t react at the time, but as I looked over my fieldnotes from my morning with Estella and Jorge in the hospital, I was surprised that Estella was even considering sending the baby away. The child was also Jorge’s son; and since Estella would have to send the baby back to her home country of Ecuador, it would be difficult or impossible for Jorge to ever see the child. He was from Colombia and, more importantly, in Israel illegally with no capacity to leave and return.

As I thought about it more, however, I realized that Estella’s decision to choose the visa over the baby, might really have been a decision to chose the father over the baby. Jorge had mentioned to me in the many conversations we had had in the weeks before the birth that Estella was consumed with worry over the prospect of his being

arrested and deported. There had recently been raids in the area of the Central Bus Station and Estella had heard through acquaintances that, because of the sensitivity over the deportation debate, the Oz deportation police force was even more prone than usual to make random arrests. The couple lived apart during the week when Estella was at work, but she had made Jorge promise that even on the days that they did not spend together, he wouldn't go outside unless it was necessary.

Jorge's track record in avoiding deportation was relatively good. In the nearly ten years that he had been living as an illegalized migrant in Israel, he had been left alone, despite the fact that, due to a variety of health problems Jorge had been quite visible to authorities through his frequent trips to hospital. His success at avoiding Oz, however, has to be understood as related to the fact that he had been a single man. Estella correctly believed that the couple's partnership was now made particularly evident by the baby and that this put Jorge in a more pressing danger. Sending the baby home would certainly save Estella's legal status, but it might also save Jorge and allow the couple to stay together.

Estella's nervousness was well-founded, perhaps more so than she realised. Her decision about the baby had to be made in a particular (and particularly distressing) time period in the activities of Israel's deportation police. Had Estella read *Ha'aretz*, one of Israel's largest newspapers, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010 just a week before she gave birth, she would have come across this story.

A migrant worker who arrived in Israel legally from the Philippines four years ago to work as a nurse is currently facing deportation over her marriage to another documented migrant worker in Israel.

Charlene Ramos married her husband, Judser Maclenda, also from the Philippines, earlier this month. On Monday, two days after their wedding celebration, Ramos was arrested by the Oz immigration police unit in Haifa. She was told that marriage is grounds for voiding a migrant worker's permit in Israel.

Police claim that she tried to hide her wedding ring. The police called Maclenda and asked him to choose which of the couple would be deported. The couple chose Ramos. Ramos was transported to the Givon prison for deportation. (Weiler-Polak, 2010)

Ramos' case caught the attention of the news media in part because of its (un)fortunate timing at the tail end of the deportation debate. But the case was not unprecedented. In using the so-called "first degree family" justification either explicitly or implicitly in the arrest, Oz was publicizing how and why one member of a married, migrant worker couple could become illegalized as a result of marriage. This practice of revoking visas for migrants who married while living in Israel was not based on any law or regulation. Rather, it was carried out through "internal directives" that were issued by, and at the discretion of, the Interior Ministry's Population Registry (Ben Israel and Feller, 2006). These directives were an interpretation and extension of the more formal prohibition on granting work visas to individuals who had immediate family members (here defined as parents, children or partners) already employed legally in Israel.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that, in this context, "immediate family" referred implicitly to a relationship defined by a heterosexual coupling. Many migrants I knew had arrived in Israel through contacts established by a biological brother or sister who was already employed in Israel with a legal work visa. While this sibling relationship also constituted one of "immediate family" members, it was evidently not perceived by the Israeli government as a relationship that would lead to permanent settlement.



Since the prohibition was designed to prevent husbands and wives, or parents and children, from migrating to Israel together with the intention of “taking root”<sup>21</sup> as a family once they arrived, the Population Registry – and by extension, Oz – took on the right to apply the rule retroactively (and without warning) to migrants who came to constitute so-called first degree family members once they were already living in Israel. The liberal application of this logic, including the intense justification for it in the political climate of the deportation debate, meant that married migrants as well as those simply suspected of wanting children could have been either arrested or else denied the formal extensions of their work visas to which they were otherwise entitled.

Estella’s worst fears, that is, that she or Jorge could be deported just because she was pregnant, became warranted even before the Ramos case. On May 5, 2010, a Filipina migrant worker, unmarried but in her eighth month of pregnancy, was arrested on the grounds that she was in a romantic relationship with a Filipino migrant worker. At the time of her arrest, both migrants were in Israel with legal work visas. While the woman declared to Oz officers that she was planning on sending her baby back to the Philippines within the allotted three-month grace period, her arrest held and she was told that she would be deported the same day (Kav LaOved 2010). In this woman’s case, the arrest was not based on pregnancy, nor was it based on the birth of a child in Israel. Rather, the first degree family directive was being used, as Oz officers readily admitted, to prevent and make illegal the relationship that the pregnancy demonstrated.

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<sup>21</sup> “Taking root” is the language used in Israel’s legal code to refer to long-term settlement. It also uses language from both the Old and New Testament, a factor that perhaps increases its emotional effect and discursive power in the Israeli context.

While it was not able to directly prohibit migrant workers from marrying and/or having children, the Interior Ministry's Population Registry discouraged these actions. It was therefore not only through the law, but through the robust "deportation regime" (Genova and Peutz, 2010) – according to which informal and discretionary directives as well as interpretations of the law were justified – that the Israeli state and government tried to regulate migrants' personal decisions. Even if arrests based on the first degree family directive were not common, the unpredictable nature of these arrests had the effect of intimidating migrants into considering Ministry actions when deciding how to manage their intimate lives.

Many migrants whom I knew, both with and without legal permits to work in Israel, routinely lied about their romantic relationships or avoided giving information about them as a result of their suspicion that such a thing could render them deportable. For example, migrants told me that they left wedding rings at home when they went to work, refrained from using the words "husband" or "wife" when referring to their partners, did not (in the case of men) inform their employers of the upcoming birth of their children, and held marriage and anniversary ceremonies in private or with careful consideration of who might attend or be watching. Indeed, these practices and the forms of intimidation to which they were responding, had wide-ranging effects on migrants' everyday lives and what I have called here the "space of action" (Bailey et al. 2002: 139) within which migrants enacted their permanent temporariness. Willen (2007) has elaborated on this point in her research on the "phenomenology of illegality" among migrants in Tel Aviv during a particularly intensive period of deportations in 2002.

“[L]ocal configurations of illegality”, including the fearful and violent tone set by aggressive deportation campaigns, altered migrants’ “subjective experiences of time, space, embodiment, sociality and self” (2007:10) to such a degree that even apparently banal, everyday moments were infused, for migrants, with an underlying sense of threat and unease.

While the forms of intimidation established by the deportation authorities between 2009-2011 were similarly effective in inspiring fear and even terror among migrants, it is also clear that such intimidation was only partially effective in actually controlling migrant settlement. The continued, and according to some estimates, rising prevalence of migrant women having children in Tel Aviv at that time was a testament to the fact that the articulations and interventions of the deportation authorities set parameters for migrants’ decision-making and fostered an atmosphere of contention and uncertainty around those decisions, even as they failed in fully preventing migrants from engaging in romantic relationships and living with partners.

This section has illustrated some of the ways in which temporariness, both in its ideal form and in its practical manifestation, was enforced among migrants living in Tel Aviv. As Janet’s story suggests, and as the next section will demonstrate in greater detail, however, permanence and temporariness were mutually constitutive such that it was often because of, and not in spite of, the deportation authorities and the various regulations and attempts at enforcing temporariness, that migrants began planning more long-term stays in Israel.

Encouraged permanence and the irony of deporting the head of the family

Despite the high profile cases cited in the media, and the increased danger that was brought on illegalized people in general over the course of the debate over the children's deportation, I learned several times and in a variety of ways that there was an unspoken code among Oz deportation police which related to their treatment of pregnant women and children. That is, such women were rarely detained by Oz officers who routinely conducted inspections in migrant-heavy areas of Tel Aviv but who were known to look the other way when they encountered a migrant woman admitting that she was either pregnant or the primary caregiver of her own child. The mothers whom I knew were so keenly aware of this fragile and changeable practice that they never left the house without their children's birth certificates, photos, and all official documents tucked safely inside their own passports and expired work visas.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, the relative security or even immunity that individual migrant mothers have reportedly felt during random street inspections has been balanced out by two significant practices. First, "migrant families" have frequently been the objects of formal and structured government campaigns to rid the country of particular groups of illegalized residents. Israeli-born children of undocumented migrants were the object of the deportation order issued during 2009-2011, and another which was issued in 2005.

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<sup>22</sup> As Willen has noted about undocumented women in Tel Aviv in the late 1990s and early 2000s, many learned to use their children's documents as a "badge of immunity" or to think of the children themselves as akin to a "visa" (2003:33) that could be useful in minimizing difficulties while running errands. Willen explains that increased deportation efforts that took place towards the end of her fieldwork rendered this strategy no longer viable. By 2009 however, the practice was in full swing again, perhaps particularly effective considering the (often favourable) media attention on the plight of illegalized children.

Similarly, it was the family unit (mother, father and child) that was especially targeted in the 2002 and 2004 government campaigns that aimed to entice migrants to “voluntarily” leave the country through a combination of providing adults and children with subsidized plane tickets to one parent’s country of origin while systematically conducting raids that intended to intimidate them into accepting this offer over the more unpredictable and sometimes violent experience of forced deportation.

Second, migrant men who are known by authorities to be fathers and/or husbands have always been targets for deportation on the assumption that, as so-called heads of the family, their absence would entice their wives or girlfriends, and their children, to leave of their own accord. This tactic by the deportation police was the subject of Edgar’s critique of the Israeli government noted at the beginning of this chapter. Despite the benefits to the Israeli government of this indirect way of lessening the number of illegalized people – not the least of which was avoiding high profile cases of forced deportation, like the ones described above – it was apparent in many cases that the deportation of fathers and husbands had the exact opposite effect of what was intended. That is, instead of encouraging women to leave Israel, the deportation of their husbands, boyfriends and/or the fathers of their children, encouraged or even required women to stay for longer periods so that they could take over the financial burden of caring for their children alone. Janet’s story is again instructive in this respect.

When Francisco was a year old, Janet and her husband decided to formally celebrate his baptism. They made arrangements with Janet’s pastor and invited friends to join them at the church and then for lunch. The family was walking through Levinsky

Park on their way to the church when they were stopped by Oz. Janet told me that the officers asked for their papers and when none of the three could produce anything valid, they took Janet's husband to jail. He waited a week in detention for his original employer to purchase his return ticket to Thailand and eventually he was deported. I asked Janet how her life changed after her husband's deportation.

Its hard for me because Francisco is only one year old and its not easy for me because all the time [my husband and I] were together and he is working and I'm not working for long hours because he is with me, and we were helping together about all the financial problems. But when he leave us I need to work very hard because I'm alone and I still need to support all my brothers and sisters in the Philippines. And then for Francisco, I need to give him all he needs also, an apartment and everything. It was so hard.

Janet's reading of the situation, that her husband's deportation increased the pressure that she felt to stay in Israel and continue to make money, was one that I heard several times. In her case, the issue was complicated by the fact that she and her husband were from different countries. The assumption on the part of Israeli authorities, that migrant women and children would follow men back to their shared country of origin once they were deported, was made even more unlikely by the common situation in which migrant couples each had different citizenships and would have found it difficult or impossible to live together in any place other than Israel.

Edgar, whose quote opens this chapter, had been active for many years in his church and had participated in attempts to prevent the deportation of both men and women from what he called his "Nigerian community". He put an even finer point on what he saw as the disconnect between the intentions of the Israeli government and the results of deporting those who were perceived by authorities as the heads of the family.

Now there are some of them they catch their husbands and remains only the mother and the child and maybe they borrowed money to come and they have not finished paying the money back yet. How are they going to pay the money if the husband is not working. How are they going to live?...When can I go if I owe money. If I cannot save money I cannot go. Even if I plan for two years, then if I make it I can go. There are a lot of things they are doing which is making people stay longer.

Edgar explained to me one Sunday afternoon, as we watched his daughter play in the park, that he had been lucky. He, his wife, and seven-year-old daughter Evie, continued to live together in Tel Aviv even as they had witnessed the deportation of many other fathers whom they knew. Evie was on the list of the 1,200 children who had been slated for deportation that year, and while Edgar had always been active in struggles to help his fellow Nigerians fight detention and deportation, his resolve and anger had been increased by the fact that it was now his daughter, and not him, who was in immediate danger.

Edgar was particularly critical of the Israeli government for creating what he saw as an epidemic of single motherhood among Africans in Tel Aviv. Because he himself had a child in Nigeria, and six siblings who still lived there and whom he supported with his earnings as a house cleaner in a Tel Aviv suburb, Edgar knew what these women were going through. "People don't understand. They think Israel is a heaven. It is not, and it is not my choice to be here. I would rather be in my own country. But there is no job and no money...You can't just go back if you don't have a job."

Edgar further explained that women whose partners had been deported had to shoulder a heavier financial burden than they had when their male partners were in Israel with them. In describing what he saw as the government's misguided attempt at enforcing

temporariness, Edgar was articulating the ways in which permanence and temporariness were mutually constituted and mutually dependent in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011.

Before they thought maybe if they sacked the fathers, the mother would take the child and follow them. That's what they said to catch all the men. But now, even if you catch the man the lady knows that if I go today my husband doesn't have a job and my child doesn't have a job. And now one person taking care of the child and taking care of the father at home, make her stay here for longer without getting the money.

Unlike Janet or Estella, but similar to numerous West African migrants who were living in Tel Aviv, Edgar had arrived in Israel through the so-called tourist loophole. Upon arrival in the country, he was issued a visa at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv that allowed him three months in Israel as a tourist. He had overstayed this visa and continued to live and work in illegalized jobs cleaning houses. Like both the women, and like the vast majority of his African neighbours, Edgar was primarily motivated to go to Israel in order to work and make money to support his family back home.<sup>23</sup>

While he had been settled for several years in Tel Aviv and even had managed to pursue a music career in the spare time he had from work, Edgar told me that he lived with a sense of restriction. He was critical of the contradiction inherent in the fact that illegalized people in Israel were rendered immobile by their lack of official papers. As such, they had a difficult time making informed decisions about how long to stay in the

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<sup>23</sup> While acknowledging that migrants' explicit economic goals were a crucial aspect of their desire and tendency to overstay a tourist visa and to live as illegalized migrants in Israel, migrants – particularly from West Africa and the Philippines – cited religion or religiously-inspired expectations as another main reason for choosing Israel as a destination country. As Willen (2007) and Liebelt (2008, 2011a, 2011b) have both noted in ethnographies of African and Filipino migrants in Israel, the country's position in Christian thought as the biblical Holy Land or in the words of one migrant, "God's own land" (Willen 2007:15), has had a significant influence on migrants' desire, at least initially, to spend a period of time in Israel.



country, or when to leave. The imposition of immobility on the part of the Israeli government's laws and practices, according to Edgar, was another reason that people stayed longer. "That is why we are all fighting because if you don't have papers you can't even go home. I can't leave and come back to go there and study the situation and decide if I want to go back. You can't just go back if you don't have a job. You have to check." Factors that might have encouraged Edgar to leave Israel, such as returning to Nigeria and finding work, or else noticing how much he missed his family members or his old lifestyle, were effectively taken away from him by his living as an illegalized person in Tel Aviv. He and his friends were keenly aware that if they were to leave the country, having already overstayed their visas, they would never be allowed re-entry.

Overall then, for Janet, Edgar and others, the condition of deportability had the effect of encouraging them to stay rather than to go. Since their ability to stay was tenuous and since experience had taught them that family and community members could disappear at any moment in the face of government policies that sought to regulate temporariness, illegalized migrants felt compelled to take root, to concentrate on making as much money as possible, and to foster structures and forms of personal stability, if only for their own sense of having some control over their lives. In this way, permanent temporariness operated on a collective level where the threat that any individual could be forced to leave had the effect of making family and community life more entrenched for whole groups of people.

Of course, it would be inaccurate to attribute permanence strictly to political structures that coerced people to stay while forcing others to go. Attempts at permanence,

as has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, were also generated by individuals' own desires, designs and strategies. As Bailey et al. (2002) observed:

[S]ignified by uncertainty and division, a sense of 'permanent temporariness' describes both the static experience of being temporary (i.e. in suspended legal, geographic, and social animation, and so on) and the secretion of strategies of resistance (strategic visibility) in the acquired knowledge that such temporariness is permanent. (2002:139)

It is to these strategies, their implications, and especially their quality of visibility that I turn in the next chapter. The continuation of Estella's story, however, is a useful way to close this chapter and to underscore two points about permanent temporariness described thus far. First, temporariness, liminality and deportability were by no means static categories but potentially long-term conditions that characterized days, months and years of people's lives. Second, this form of permanent temporariness involved a constant interplay between that which was mandated and that which individuals chose within the framework of that mandate.

### **Beyond "baby or visa", a three-month ultimatum two years later**

It was nearly seven months after that day in the hospital with Estella that I was back in Tel Aviv for a second and much shorter period of fieldwork. Jorge had asked me to accompany the couple to the Ministry of the Interior to officially register their baby. I was a little shocked that they had gone so long without at least initiating this process. Although it was clear to me that illegalized people were not always eager to engage with governmental administration, many parents whom I knew in Tel Aviv, who had managed

to pay for their hospital stay and procure a birth certificate, had also felt it necessary to complete the registration process within a few months of their child being born.

Jorge and Estella's behaviour on this matter seemed a little unusual to me. Indeed, they didn't yet have a name for the baby, official or otherwise, and Jorge just grinned sheepishly and shrugged his shoulders when I asked him what they had been calling him. When I met the couple in front of the large glass and steel Ministry building on a sunny December morning, Estella's comments gave a more concrete shape to the ambivalence I was observing. Even for a few months after the baby was born, she told me, Moises from the employment agency had called her a few times to double check that she was going to be sending the baby to Ecuador. He wasn't pressuring her, she told me, but just said that he valued her work and thought he would be able to find her a good employer if she decided in the end to keep her work visa. Estella said that she was surprised at Moises' persistence and flattered that he was so eager to keep her on at the agency. For his part, Jorge just laughed in his characteristic nervous manner as he touched the baby on his head and said "What did they think we were going to do, put him in a basket and send him away?"

Even as they doted on the baby and told me lovingly about all the milestones that he had passed in the months that I hadn't seen him, I could sense that Moises' offers had given Jorge and Estella something to think about and discuss. Putting off registering the baby was perhaps a sign of the couple's belief that they could still make choices regarding how to proceed as an illegalized family. Delaying registration certainly was related to their desire to keep a low profile in the face of the new and potentially

dangerous circumstances that having a child signified for them. Jorge and Estella had heard from me and others that registering the baby required that the parents (if they were illegalized) sign a document stating that they were aware of their illegal status and agreed to leave the country within 30 days. To all of our relief, no such document was offered to us. We were able to register Emmanuel, issue him a formal document from the Israeli government – albeit one that stated his nationality as Ecuadorian – and proceed to a celebratory lunch at a kebab restaurant at the corner of Jorge and Estella’s street.

About a year and a half later, when I was back in Toronto and walking home from work one afternoon, I received a call from Estella on my cell phone. She told me that she just wanted to say hello and to let me know that she and Jorge had moved to a different apartment close to the one into which they had first moved together. “It’s much better, Maya”, she told me, more spacious than the last, an essential feature since Emmanuel was running around so much and making so much noise these days. I heard him in the background, first singing, then screaming and then talking to his father in the single Hebrew words that any two-year-old would want to master: ball, milk, juice. Estella laughed when she told me that he almost never said words in Spanish, even though she was sure he understood them. She had put him in a local day-care that was run by an illegalized Colombian woman who spoke to the children in Spanish and who always kept the television on the channel that ran Venezuelan and Mexican *telenovelas* (soap operas). Still, Emmanuel and the other children, most of whom were older than him, communicated in Hebrew, and it was through them that he was learning to talk.

I asked Estella about work and she gave me her typical answer, that there was lots of it, that she was grateful for that, but that long hours and commutes tired her out. Work was not easy she told me, but also not too hard and, anyway, she didn't like to complain. She was happy to know that there were always opportunities to find work if she ever had problems with this employer. "Everything is fine, thank God" she said to me as we were about to hang up the phone. "We just wanted to call to tell you that we're still here and to ask when you were coming for a visit".

Despite the fears and anxieties that had accompanied Estella's pregnancy, Emmanuel's birth, and the many months that followed after that, over a year later, Jorge and Estella had managed to settle into life in Tel Aviv. They were never entirely safe of course, and both kept a close watch on the activities of the deportation police in their neighbourhood and surrounding areas. But life did proceed for them in the simultaneously precarious and stable fashion to which they had become accustomed.

Like all the illegalized people in Tel Aviv whom I knew, Estella and Jorge both had a steady stream of illegalized work, including cleaning, baby-sitting, gardening, window-washing, construction and maintenance work and other forms of manual labour in private homes, offices and schools. As in Martin's formula, citizen residents of Tel Aviv had come to depend on illegalized people as a reliable source of low-wage labour, just as illegalized people were dependent on the availability of such work, particularly when they had children to support. While it initially threatened to put Estella, Jorge, Janet and her husband, and Edgar and his wife in an even more tenuous state of temporariness than that in which they were already, the implications of having a child in Israel in fact

increased at least some of these migrants' permanence in several ways, not least of which was that they were driven into an underground economy that promised a form of work that was as permanently temporary as the people who were hired to do it.

### **Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have built on earlier research that explored the paradoxical quality of migrant worker programs, namely, that they purport to be founded on migrant temporariness, while by their very nature they encourage both the permanent settlement of individual migrants and a perpetual flow of additional temporary migrants in and out of industries that have come to depend on the low-wage and disposable labour that deportable migrants provide. In Tel Aviv, migrants have become permanently temporary by overstaying their visas, developing relationships, giving birth to and raising children, and planning long-term stays in Israel despite having to live as illegalized residents of the city in order to do so. In this context, women migrants who were also girlfriends, wives, pregnant women or new mothers were especially subject to the interplay between, and mutual reinforcement of, permanence and temporariness. Specifically, giving birth to an illegalized child in Tel Aviv highlighted migrants' temporary status as it led to women losing their work visas, becoming illegalized and facing the increased threat of having their male partners deported. At the same time, the greater financial responsibility of (single) parenthood when combined with the availability of illegalized jobs in domestic work and with women's amplified interactions with community groups and social service

agencies, enhanced the probability that illegalized migrant women would feel permanent in Tel Aviv and planned to settle permanently there.

My observations of the ways in which migrant women have inhabited a “space of action” (Bailey et al. 2002) through which they engaged regularly and intensively with Israeli state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic practices and socio-cultural expectations have demonstrated the operations of a politics of intimacy in Tel Aviv between 2009-2011. These politics were personally intimate as they structured the “intimate domains” of sex, sentiment, child-rearing and domestic arrangement. They demonstrated interdependence as they involved the constant interaction of legal enforcement and women’s strategies of resistance. Finally, these politics produced an intimate condition, that is, permanent temporariness, which I’ve shown to be a seemingly oppositional but internally coherent paradox that characterized the everyday lives of illegalized migrant women and their children.

## CHAPTER FOUR: VISIBLE INVISIBILITY

“This is a great occasion for migrant workers to show that they are part of the Israeli community...In Israel many times we call them transparent because nobody sees them, but they are working everywhere...we should see them.”

(Migrant rights’ activist speaking about “migrant auditions” for

*Kochav Nolad* – the Israeli version of *American Idol*)

“It is not simply true that if I am disempowered or a society’s outsider, then I am invisible. Rather, what happens is that I access visibility in ways that are largely or completely out of my control.” (Brighenti 2007:333)

In the previous chapter I outlined one aspect of migrant women’s interdependent engagement with the Israeli state and government. Specifically, I described laws, legal enforcement, employment standards and deportation regulations and practices that were associated with the Israeli government’s efforts to control the amount of time migrants stayed in the country. Ethnographic material demonstrated how these laws and practices have shaped, but also been shaped by, migrant women’s own efforts to imagine and manage their reproductive and domestic lives. The processes through which this interdependent engagement took place, what I’ve called the politics of intimacy, have created the conditions for migrant women to live in a state of permanent temporariness.

In this chapter I illustrate another intimate condition of illegalized migrant women’s lives. I move from the temporal realm to the visual realm as I explore how, like permanence and temporariness, visibility and invisibility are two seemingly opposed but mutually constitutive features of migrants’ relationship to Israeli structures and ideologies. I base my exploration on an understanding of visibility as an active process. That which is visible is not a fixed image but a “social process in itself” (Brighenti



2007:325) through which particular “ways of seeing” (329 original emphasis) are linked directly to *what* is seen. As the quote above suggests, the always linked processes of visibility and invisibility – what I refer to and analyze in the following pages as (in)visibility – are never neutral. Rather (in)visibility is comprised of various power-laden processes that have implications both for how individuals and groups are positioned in society, and for how much control they exercise over that positioning. In order to understand illegalized migrant women’s (in)visibility in this light, I ask how these migrants employed particular ‘ways of seeing’, and perhaps more importantly, particular ‘ways of *being seen*’ in their everyday interactions in Tel Aviv. What aspects of migrant women and migrant women’s lives were (in)visible to Israeli bureaucrats, service providers, law enforcement officers, the Israeli public and migrants’ own friends and neighbours? How did migrants contribute to their own (in)visibility in the public realm, under what conditions did these engagements take place, and to what ends? How did Israeli citizens contribute to the making (in)visible of migrant issues as well as individual migrants?

I address these questions with ethnographic descriptions of the politics of intimacy, in this case, illegalized migrant women’s interactions with medical institutions, NGOs, popular media and members of the Israeli public. I focus particularly on comparing the experiences and activities of different migrants (women, men and children) in three overlapping fields of (in)visibility; bureaucratic, physical and political. The stories of two illegalized migrant women, one whose 12-year-old son was slated for deportation in 2009 and one who gave birth to a baby girl in 2010, introduce the themes

of the chapter and are my primary guides through the analysis of (in)visibility in this context.

**Starting to show: The optics of illegalized motherhood –  
Lupe and Nora**

Lupe's visible pregnancy

Lupe was sitting on the couch in my apartment and reaching over to open the window when her breathing became heavy and she had to take a rest. It was just early April, but Tel Aviv's characteristic summer humidity had arrived early, and the heat was exacting its toll on Lupe. At 35 weeks pregnant, and about 20 kilos over her regular weight, Lupe's movements were getting considerably slower and more laboured. She told me that she felt like an elephant.

On that particular day, Lupe had taken a half-hour bus ride and ambled up the steps to my apartment in order to show me a letter from the Ministry of Interior, Population Immigration and Border Authority. The letter stated, in English, that since her claim for asylum had been rejected, Lupe would have to leave the country in 30 days. Even though she had been in Israel at that point for almost a year without any valid visa, this letter represented the first time her lack of citizenship status had been presented to her in official terms. She was clearly distraught, and had come over to see what we could do about this development.

Lupe was 33 years of age when she left Colombia to work in Israel as a caregiver for the elderly. Her first employer yelled all the time and verbally abused her, and her second employer had demanded that she eat and shower only at scheduled times during

the week. Fed up with the lack of dignity in the work, and the fact that the agency which had recruited her and arranged her employment refused to intervene, Lupe quit her job as an eldercare worker and sought employment as a baby-sitter instead. This change in employment had long-term implications, invalidating Lupe's work visa and causing her to lose her status for two inter-related reasons. First, like all work visas issued to "foreign workers" in Israel, Lupe's visa was matched with a work permit that was held by her employment agency (individual employers were also authorized to hold work permits). Her decision to cut contact with the agency voided a necessary part of the contractual agreement on which the visa was based. Second, Lupe's decision to work as a baby-sitter also violated the term of her contract which specified that she was only able to work in "nursing care", which was one of the six named trades in which migrant workers could be employed in the time that Lupe made the switch to this labour sector.

Despite losing her legal status, Lupe nevertheless continued to work as a baby-sitter and began to settle herself into life in Tel Aviv as a legalized resident. Like many other Colombians in Israel, Lupe applied for political asylum in the hopes that she would be granted refugee status and be able to live in the country legally. Although she was aware that her chance of getting refugee status was extraordinarily remote,<sup>24</sup> Lupe nevertheless believed submitting an application was her best option for obtaining status. When her claim was rejected, she was not surprised. She was however, concerned, and made her way to my apartment that day looking more nervous than I had ever seen her.

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<sup>24</sup> As of 2009, the UNHCR office in Tel Aviv reported that, over the country's history, 170 asylum seekers had been granted asylum in Israel, a figure that suggests an acceptance rate of less than one percent (IRINnews 2009).

I called a friend of mine who worked at an NGO that helped illegalized people process various kinds of legal claims. He advised us that a good, immediate strategy for Lupe was a temporary visa that was sometimes granted to migrants who had medical conditions that would make it difficult or impossible for them to leave the country. My friend explained that this was described in official terms as a humanitarian measure, considered for people who had an extremely debilitating injury, a scheduled surgery in an Israeli hospital, or some other impending appointment that was considered part of life-saving treatment. If Lupe could get the initial meeting with the Ministry before she gave birth, she might be able to make the case that airlines would not allow her to fly at this late stage of her pregnancy and that her condition therefore made it impossible for her to fulfill her deportation order. My friend told us that such a temporary visa could mean that Lupe would be given a few extra months of official status in Tel Aviv. He was also careful to mention, however, that getting such a visa was a long shot, only temporary, and that it was potentially even more dangerous for Lupe to “show herself to the Ministry” than it would be for her to continue to hide the way she had up to that point.

My friend and I concluded that the visa application was also the only proactive choice that Lupe had at that moment. I nervously recounted all of this information to Lupe, trying my best to keep the details straight and not frighten her too much with the possible outcomes. When I was finished, Lupe took a deep breath, looked down at her stomach, and rested her hands there. “Maybe we should just wait,” she said. “With this belly, I’ll probably be fine anyway. The problem will come when the belly disappears.”

Lupe's case demonstrated the significance of her visibility as a pregnant migrant woman in Tel Aviv. Specifically, Lupe interpreted her pregnant body as temporary amnesty from deportation. This interpretation was well-founded. As noted in the previous chapter, visibly pregnant women and mothers of young children could count on having near immunity from being stopped or detained by Tel Aviv's deportation police. While it did happen (on at least one publicized occasion in the year that I was in Tel Aviv) that this police force, most commonly known as Oz, would detain or announce their intention to deport a migrant woman who was also pregnant, this scenario was mostly avoided. In 2009-2011, while the deportation debate was at its height and protests were increasingly gaining mainstream support, deportation authorities including Oz and the Ministry of the Interior had added incentive to steer clear of any negative media attention.

But Lupe's problem was not simply that she would be detected by the deportation authorities. Rather, the letter that she had been sent signified that Lupe had become visible in this social and political context. Three aspects, or fields of visibility, are relevant here. First, with her expanding stomach, Lupe was *physically visible*. Being a pregnant woman meant that she would not be allowed to board an airplane and would not be perceived (by the authorities or by the public) as a suitable detainee or deportee. Second, the letter had referenced that Lupe was *bureaucratically visible* as someone whose claim for asylum had been officially rejected and who was now documented or "on the books" as having been officially identified and formally asked to leave the country. Third, Lupe was *politically visible*, as the timing of her pregnancy, specifically the fact that she was about to have a baby amidst a flurry of public debate over this particular

matter, made her emblematic of the issues being addressed through the debate as well as its implications for the future of Israel.

Some scholars of migration have commented on the “invisibility” of migrant workers (Anderson 2000, Sherran 2009, Lai 2010), exploring how the devaluing of their work can separate migrants from mainstream society and thus hide them from public view. The notion of invisibility, according to this scholarship, highlights the ways in which low-wage workers, especially in the sphere of domestic work, go unseen (both literally and conceptually) because of the multiple isolations of their workplaces. Workers are out of the public eye - literally - if their work occurs only in private homes or in other remote or illegalized sites, such as agricultural areas, construction sites, restaurant kitchens or brothels. Workers are also unseen, both physically and conceptually, because their work is considered unskilled, and because their work conditions are in large part left out of legal codes (or the enforcement of such codes) and in the hands of individual employers.

Other scholars, while accepting of the idea of migrant work as isolated or set apart from mainstream society, have challenged the simplicity of understanding migrant workers themselves as either wholly visible or wholly invisible. Ethnographic studies have suggested, instead, that individuals experience or engender visibility in different and uneven ways. Migrants may be made visible or even “supra-visible” (Brighenti 2007:330) in the public sphere, for example, while the conditions of their migration and their social and political marginalization remain invisible. For domestic workers, this form of uneven visibility means having “visible bodies [but] invisible work” (Chin 2003), that is, bodies

that are racialized, gendered and scrutinized (seen and noticed), doing work that is naturalized, located in the background, and carried out under illegalized circumstances (unseen and unnoticed). Illegalized migrants in all labour sectors straddle the visibility line in these ways when they move through workplaces without documents or labour rights but then have their photographs and personal stories publicized in popular media at the political moment in which they become the objects of high profile deportations (Heyman 1995, Astor 2009).

The suspension of deportations, either through detention of individual migrants or through the initiation of a public debate (such as the one initiated by the Israeli government in the case outlined here), became important moments for exploring migrant (in)visibility and its uneven quality. This is because individuals who are frozen in a state of being “unauthorized yet recognized” (Sassen 2002: 246) tend to be scrutinized to a much higher degree than is normally the case. Migrants in this liminal situation are made to participate in the quality of their recognition, determining how they will be seen, through what political lens, and to what end. They are agents of their (in)visibility in this respect. But they are also subject, as the quote that begins this chapter suggests, to the social and political narratives and practices of the context in which they are being recognized.

Processes and conditions related to pregnancy and motherhood built an additional layer onto this reality in the context of migrant women in Tel Aviv, and further complicated notions of (in)visibility. What I have defined above as three fields of (in)visibility - physical, bureaucratic and political - provide a framework for

understanding how these illegalized migrant women who had children, or who were about to have children, were especially subject to uneven and contradictory forms of seeing themselves and being seen in Israeli society.

### Nora's invisible motherhood

The experiences of Nora, a Filipina woman highly active in the anti-deportation struggle, help to draw out more examples of visible invisibility and the ways in which this tension was exemplary of the politics of intimacy in this context. Nora's case is relevant as it demonstrates some ways in which visibility was distributed very differently among illegalized women who were pregnant and/or mothers. Her story is unlike Lupe's, and yet when taken together, both narratives explore the ways in which illegalized women's decisions about their domestic lives, as well as their strategies for being recognized as potential citizens, both shaped and were shaped by Israeli state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic/administrative practices and socio-cultural expectations.

In 1985 at the age of 27, Nora decided to leave Manila and to find work overseas. She applied to go work in Oman but was denied the necessary visa. Her sister, already doing domestic work for a family in Jordan, asked her employers to recommend Nora for a job with another family that they knew in Ramallah, in the West Bank. Nora told me that visas were not the same in those years as they were when we sat down in Levinsky Park one afternoon in January of 2010. "We all came without papers. There weren't any papers." Nora told me that the work in Ramallah was okay and that it sustained her for a long while. But, by 1996, she began to hear of other Filipina women working in Tel Aviv



where salaries were much higher than in Ramallah and where there apparently would be lots of work. She quit her job, moved to Tel Aviv, and almost immediately was able to find employment as a cleaner and baby-sitter for a young Israeli family.

That year Nora's son, Arnel, also left the Philippines and joined her in Israel. Arnel was 18 years old and had gone to Israel as a tourist. He soon discovered, however, that he could save up money and possibly go to school if he settled and worked in Tel Aviv even for a short period. Arnel was successful in Israel, he found well-paying work, made friends, found a girlfriend and fathered a son. But tragedy struck very suddenly in 1999 when Arnel died of a heart problem that he had had since childhood. Nora immediately moved in with her late son's girlfriend to help care for her grandson. She described the living arrangement as "difficult, but fine", and in the same breath explained to me that it did not last past the boy's first birthday. Arnel's girlfriend moved away after about ten months, leaving her son with Nora and cutting contact with the family. Nora was left to raise her grandson, Angel, on her own.

Nora didn't tell me much about this time. Instead she skipped over details to the next period in her life when matters became even more complicated. In 2004, amidst the first public debate about granting residency to Israeli-born children of foreign workers, Angel's mother reappeared. Nora explained that she did so almost certainly hoping to insert herself into the family picture and to reconnect herself to Angel, whom everyone saw, at the time, as being on the cusp of receiving legal resident status in Israel.

By 2005, however, both women were unsuccessful in securing this status for Angel. While he was technically eligible, neither woman could bring together the

requisite forms to make a proper application. Angel's mother disappeared again, Nora continued to raise him, and by 2009 she was involved in new struggles, fighting for legal guardianship over her now 12-year-old grandson while simultaneously engaging in the broader campaign for residency rights for the Israeli-born children of illegalized migrants. When I met her in 2009, Nora was a fixture in the Filipino community. She was a leader in the anti-deportation struggle, a frequent contributor to all festivals and community projects, and a key contact for Israeli service and activist organizations working with migrants. An avid performer, often singing, dancing and acting at cultural events, Nora had become quite well-known in the Filipino and surrounding communities. She was a founding member, and then a constant presence, in what developed into a community of migrants' rights activists in Tel Aviv.

Nora's personal background, reproduced here chronologically, was actually revealed to me in disjointed pieces, themselves descriptive of her fragmented experience as an (in)visible illegalized migrant woman in Tel Aviv. I had worked with Nora for several months and had wondered privately about her seemingly inexhaustible dedication to the anti-deportation campaign before coming to understand fully her engagement with the issue. One late afternoon, while we were taking a break from asking local business owners in the Central Bus Station to donate to an upcoming fundraiser, Nora began to talk about why she felt so connected to the struggle. She produced a series of neatly folded newspaper clippings from her purse. As she was showing me the stories that had been written about her in *Ha'aretz Magazine* and another popular publication, she began to tell me about Angel.

I was surprised. Nora's relatively advanced age, along with the fact that she was seldom seen with Angel (who as a pre-teen was busy with his own friends), had made her motherhood invisible to me until that point. Unlike the other illegalized migrant women I knew who had large, pregnant bellies, or who moved around the city with babies on their hips or children holding their hands, Nora usually appeared to me (as she must have appeared to the deportation police) as a single woman. As such, her motherhood was both physically invisible and bureaucratically invisible. Indeed, the two forms of (in)visibility were intricately connected. While she cared for Angel and supported him financially, she did not look like his mother, nor did she have any documents to substantiate her claim that he was, for all intents and purposes, her son. In this way, Nora was more like illegalized migrant fathers, whose connection to their children wasn't immediately apparent and who suffered in part from increased vulnerability as a result of the invisibility of their parenthood.

But, as I have explained above, (in)visibility is often experienced in uneven ways. That Nora was invisible in physical and bureaucratic terms, for example, contributed to her high level of visibility in political terms. Her story of illegalized motherhood was unique and anomalous and, as such, became a popular human-interest story in the press. Additionally, while she did not say this herself, Nora's deeply engaged and visible relationship with popular media (doing interviews and supporting events for the anti-deportation struggle), and in local-level politics (including, but not limited to, a long-

standing leadership role in the *Mom's Committee*<sup>25</sup>) was perhaps inspired by the invisibility she experienced as a grandmother – a role which would otherwise cause her to remain unseen.

As is apparent from both Nora's and Lupe's stories, the three fields of (in)visibility can be experienced in uneven ways but are nevertheless related to one another. I use these examples to illustrate that while seemingly opposed (and often treated as such in the literature on illegalized migrants), visibility and invisibility are in fact two aspects of the same process. Nora's invisibility as a mother in the eyes of the Israeli deportation police, for example, was largely responsible for her visibility as a public figure in the media and in the anti-deportation campaign more broadly. Further, I argue that the relationship that Nora developed with both the Israeli state and the Israeli public by way of her (in)visibility was an intimate one, characterized by closeness and continuous engagement, that was demonstrative of the possibility for her to be both excluded (deported) and also included (granted status). The following sections explore the dualities inherent in each of the three fields of (in)visibility, and the ways in which these fields play upon the everyday lives of Lupe, Nora, and others.

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<sup>25</sup> Established in 2007, the *Mom's Committee* was an initiative of the Tel Aviv municipal social service organization, *Mesila*. It began when two Israeli employees of the organization invited mothers and fathers of illegalized children to develop community-based strategies to help them care for their children despite the shared constraints of poor finances, busy worklives and a lack of status. The initiative was originally called *Coffee Plus*, but later became the *Mom's Committee*, an open group that held meetings bi-monthly for approximately fifteen regular members. Beyond acting as a source of support for mothers (many of whom were caring for children on their own) the committee organized holiday events, fundraised for individual and collective needs, and threw a monthly party for all the children who were linked in some way to the committee and who had birthdays in that month.

## Seeing and being seen: the three fields of (in)visibility on the ground

### Bureaucratic (in)visibility: Serving bodies while ignoring people

An exploration of the complexity of pregnant migrant women's engagements with Israel's medical service sector provides a contrast with Nora's experience. While Nora's age and older appearance rendered her invisible as a mother in Israeli society, allowing her to become visible as an individual with a life story, a political cause and a clear set of needs, other women had the opposite experience. It was precisely because their pregnancy or impending motherhood were so visible and obvious that these migrant women were limited to engaging with Israeli society *only* as pregnant bodies. While they were 'seen' as pregnant women (potential subjects of medical care) or poor mothers (potential subjects of the social service sector), migrant women's life circumstances, personal stories, and their positions as illegalized migrants with restricted access to the rights and entitlements of full citizens, were all but unknown to the bureaucrats and professionals with whom they were required to interact on a regular basis. One of Lupe's medical appointments demonstrated this contradiction, emphasizing how her invisibility in the bureaucratic realm increased the visibility of her body.

I met Lupe at the entrance to Wolfson Hospital for her 9:00 am ultrasound. She was cheerful and looking even further along in her pregnancy than the last time I had seen her just a few weeks earlier. At six months pregnant, Lupe told me that it was only the previous week that she had had to switch from large t-shirts to actual maternity clothes,

calling on her friends and borrowing old dresses and pants that they still had from their own pregnancies. Her pregnancy, she said, was starting to feel real to her.

We laughed as we remembered how impossible our last visit to the hospital had been, how difficult a time we had finding all the different departments, and how we had been turned away at the end for not having a proper appointment. On that day, however, we were more prepared and went straight to the second floor Women's Wing for our scheduled appointment. As on the previous occasion, there were no hospital staff in sight. We took our seats anyway, and tried to ask a couple next to us if we were in the right place. They smiled at us but spoke only Russian, so we settled in to wait to see a nurse or doctor.

It was about ten minutes before a large woman came out of the closed room and asked us if we had an appointment. Lupe produced her pink plastic folder out of a backpack, the one where she kept every single document that she had collected since her first pre-natal appointment, and gave the woman the referral form from the open clinic at Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). I was impressed yet again at Lupe's vigilance in keeping her forms in order despite the fact that she couldn't read Hebrew and was consequently never exactly sure what each form stated or allowed. This particular one, in Hebrew with a few English words on it, indicated that Lupe had come from the PHR Open Clinic and was entitled to a 50% discount on the procedure. The woman glanced at the paper quickly and looked confused. She asked us in Hebrew for "Form #17". Both Lupe and I knew from many other such moments that Form #17 was the one issued by the National Insurance Service – *Kupat Cholim*. I told the woman that my friend didn't have

such a form, or indeed any insurance at all, that she was not a citizen, and that this was the reason she had come to the hospital with the form from PHR. The woman still looked a little confused, but directed us downstairs to “open a file”.

The receptionist at the Children’s Clinic downstairs barely looked up before asking us for “Form #17”. Lupe gave her the form from PHR instead, and took out her wallet. At this the woman looked up and told us that the ultrasound would be 800 NIS (approximately two hundred Canadian dollars). Lupe protested immediately, pointing emphatically but wordlessly to the section on the form where it was indicated that she was entitled to 50% off of the procedure. The receptionist apologized and recalculated. She looked up and seemed to warm up to us, asking Lupe how many weeks she was at and if she was feeling okay. She determined that Lupe would have to pay 376 NIS at yet another reception area on a different floor. As we were about to walk away, I commented that no one at the hospital seemed to know what to do with us without the *Kupat Cholim* forms. The receptionist smiled at us and said, with what I had come to recognize as the acerbic humour typical to Israelis, “Tell your friend that this is just the beginning”.

Lupe and I returned to the original waiting room where there was yet more paperwork. I asked if the survey and liability statement that Lupe was required to fill out and sign came in languages other than Hebrew, but was told that while they used to have English and Russian, they had run out of both. No other languages had ever been available. I began to translate, stumbling over difficult words and medical terminology. But Lupe told me that she was fine to just sign it because she “had to”. She explained to me that she had grown accustomed to signing things she couldn’t read. I managed to

convey that the liability form asked Lupe to be aware that the test could not be 100% accurate or exhaustive, and that the survey asked several questions about the medical history and personal habits of the mother and father. Lupe laughed, rolling her eyes as I went through the left side column that asked for information about the “husband”. She signed both forms.

After so much confusion and translation, Lupe and I both were clearly relieved to discover that the doctor we were seeing was originally from Uruguay. While we both knew that there were many South American Jews who had immigrated to Israel, we had rarely found them among the government, social service or medical professionals whom we had encountered. Lupe and the doctor chatted together in Spanish about his travels in Colombia, as we moved over to another room with a bed, a computer and a large flat screen television mounted on the wall. Lupe’s eyes welled up at the site of the foetus on the screen, telling the doctor how amazed she was at the process of the ultrasound, even though she couldn’t make out any of the body parts to which he was referring. Lupe was told that the foetus was already over two kilos, was well-positioned in the womb, and appeared healthy. “*Todo perfecto*” (“Everything is perfect”), the doctor said smiling before confirming what Lupe told me that she had known from the very beginning. It was a girl.

Lupe was in a great mood as we left the hospital. Carefully folding up the ultrasound photographs and placing them in her pink folder, she told me that some moments really made up for all the frustration, all the spending of her hard-earned money, and the administrative headaches. Indeed, her time navigating the paperwork in the



hospital that day was exemplary of a contradictory experience that she had had throughout her pregnancy. Although top level pre-natal services (including sophisticated equipment, skilled medical practitioners, and modern facilities) were available to illegalized women in Tel Aviv, much of the administration of such services was partial, tenuous and generally unsuited to the needs of Lupe and women like her. Finding one's way around the hospital, successfully filling out forms, and being a self-advocate in the face of Tel Aviv's many-layered bureaucracy and impatient bureaucrats, required a level of ability and understanding that illegalized migrant women would likely not have or be able to muster, given such a high pressured situation. Lupe was visible as a pregnant woman, a patient, and a medicalized body in need of treatment in the scenario just described. Indeed she was fully seen and understood as such. But as a whole person, situated as she was in a very particular social and political context, and requiring as she did specific accommodations, Lupe was all but invisible.

In his work on the role of medical institutions in deportation policies in Germany, Nijhawan described the migrant body as "the surface upon which realms of belonging and exclusion are inscribed" (2005:282). While the medical encounter itself, typified in the examination, is one site for exploring the inscription of belonging and exclusion on the migrant body, it is the system through which bodies and narratives of the body are filtered both before and after the examination, what Nijhawan calls "bureaucratic regimes" (282), that often constitutes a more enduring and significant process of inscription. For Nijhawan and others (see Fassin 2005, Sargent 2006), the paperwork associated with medical examinations and procedures has required migrants and their doctors to name

bodily experiences and conditions according to the categories set out by the state and its immigration and/or refugee acceptance system. Asylum seekers in Germany, for example, have learned to present themselves to their doctors as victims of trauma (specifically Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and to submit forms and reports to immigration authorities that label them as such (Nijhawan 2005:273). In the case of Germany as in others, the bureaucratic regimes that organized medical systems reinforced and helped to shape the law as they “produce[d] certain categories of bodies” (275).

Nijhawan’s discussion of the state’s inscription of its migration categories onto migrants’ bodies is instructive, even as the Israeli context presented a case in which few fixed categories or practices existed for illegalized migrant women. In fact it was the *lack* of bureaucratic categories in Tel Aviv hospitals, mirroring the state’s lack of a migration policy for non-Jewish migrants and residents of the country, which inscribed itself onto migrant bodies in this context. In other words, in the absence of any fixed ways of seeing migrants in Tel Aviv hospitals, women were susceptible to being ‘seen’ in huge range of ways that, above all else, were unpredictable and therefore particularly disempowering.

On the day I accompanied Lupe to the ultrasound, for example, as on several other occasions in which we met with people working in Israel’s medical industry, hospital staff were not aware of how to handle someone not covered under the national health system. Amidst the confusion, Lupe had only to rely on her instincts and her will. Complications that Lupe and other women like her encountered included, but were not limited to, how administratively to process someone who intended to pay the set price (in cash) for a given procedure. It was not uncommon, in various medical facilities

throughout Tel Aviv, for illegalized migrants to have interactions with staff that were *ad-hoc*, unclear and inconsistent.

As is evident from the ultrasound appointment described above, medical care of illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv relied on a patchwork of forms, explanations and belaboured communication. Lupe and other women like her were patients in need of care, but bureaucratically they were exceptions to the rule, anomalies to be treated on a case-by-case basis. Ironically this invisibility, the condition of being un-nameable or existing outside of the regular labels of the hospital bureaucracy had the effect of labeling Lupe's body not as one that simply did not belong, but rather as one that *both* belonged *and* did not belong in that realm. Since she did not represent any set category, Lupe's status in the hospital was perpetually open to interpretation. Again, the lack of predictability inherent in being 'unseen' or uncategorizable in the bureaucratic realm considerably diminished Lupe's control over how she was treated in this context as well as the goods and services she was able to obtain.

A significant agent in managing the hospital's interpretation of individual migrants' cases was Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), an organization that attempted to reduce the most egregious structural barriers that illegalized migrants faced in accessing medical services in Tel Aviv. Through their Open Clinic, PHR engaged in advocacy and service provision for illegalized people who were accessing the healthcare system. Their interventions included doing basic examinations in their small clinic in Jaffa and providing referrals and discounts for tests and procedures in participating laboratories and hospitals. Patients at the clinic were given multilingual information on

how to get to another healthcare facility (including which buses to take and hours of operation), and on how much each test or procedure would cost. Small pieces of paper that were stapled to clinic forms, letters and referrals, allowed people who did not speak the main operating languages of Hebrew, Arabic, or English to ask bus drivers or other locals for assistance on how to get to their destinations.

In effect, the clinic was an alternate bureaucracy, albeit one that functioned only as an appendage to the one that already existed. Thus for example, the clinic's referrals served both as a reminder to frontline workers that discounts should be provided to the bearer and as a mode of communication between illegalized migrants and the medical personnel whom they had to contact. Often, the referrals were the only form of communication exchanged between patients and the doctors, nurses, technicians and administrative staff who were responsible for giving them access to, and carrying out, tests and procedures. This appended bureaucracy or system of management was built on PHR's consistent work in making connections with medical facilities (including board members, head physicians and key administrators), negotiating the terms of potential service provision, and establishing (always tentative and changeable) agreements that guaranteed discounts for particular tests and procedures.

The staff and volunteers at PHR, many of whom were involved in activism outside their workplace, were aware of the ways in which their clinic and the services it provided helped to keep migrants from becoming integrated into the mainstream medical system. As such, they were critical of the government for not creating and facilitating more sustainable healthcare practices for people who were excluded, for whatever reason,

from *Kupat Cholim*. It was because of the continued relevance and import of these critiques among PHR staff that, in 2008, on the heels of a massive increase in case loads, and multiple requests to have the Ministry of Health develop a specific program for incorporating illegalized people into the national health system, that the clinic closed its doors in a sign of protest.

Just prior to the closure, PHR issued a public letter to then Health Minister Yacov Ben Yizri detailing the reasons for the protest. "A volunteer clinic, with a low budget, cannot, should not and is incapable of being a worthy substitute for a proper solution from the state." (Sinai, 2008) Each day following the closure, volunteers were brought to the clinic to accompany 20 to 30 patients at a time (illegalized migrants who continued to show up at the clinic for assessment or treatment) to a nearby hospital emergency room. Patients were also given flyers that explained how they could access medical care over the period of time that the clinic was closed. I was told by a PHR staff member who remembered the incident, that administrative and medical personnel at the hospitals were completely overwhelmed with the increased volume of patients. Israeli patients, he told me, appeared to be equally overwhelmed as they were made to share the triage station and waiting room with large groups of (mostly Eritrean) asylum seekers. These citizens, coming from various parts of the country and from all racialized, class and ethnic backgrounds, reported being shocked and alarmed at seeing this sector of Israeli society for the first time (personal communication Ran Cohen, Executive Director PHR, December 8, 2010).

The clinic closure, an action that lasted just over three months, brought the issue of public health for illegalized migrants into high relief. Ultimately, the Ministry of Health responded, opening a separate state-funded clinic in Tel Aviv's Central Bus Station. This solution was not viewed as a gain by PHR staff, however, as the new clinic was small, ill-equipped, limited to servicing only asylum seekers with documentation that they were from countries designated as dangerous by the United Nations, and generally unreliable. I had various experiences during the period in which I volunteered at the PHR migrants' clinic in which patients would return from the "refugee clinic" (as it was known), claiming that it was closed, that they were turned away, or that they had been instructed to come back to PHR for tests or services that would only be available to them either at the clinic or through the clinic's relationships with local hospitals and laboratories.

The closure of the PHR clinic, also called the "PHR strike", references another aspect of migrants' paradoxical form of (in)visibility in Israeli society. In this example, as well as in the case of Lupe's reliance on her pregnancy as a strategy against being deported, migrants were using their own bodies and medical conditions as the medium through which they engaged with and confronted a public that otherwise ignored them. In other words, where the bureaucracy failed to see them, migrants were making themselves seen through their physical presence.

The PHR strike generated attention in the Israeli public sphere in large part because of a generalized public panic at the time that associated Eritrean asylum seekers, who were the largest group of migrants to Israel in 2007/2008, with bringing tuberculosis

and other communicable diseases into Israel. By exposing Israeli hospitals and patients to the sight of Eritrean migrants (many of whom bore the clear physical marks of their long and harrowing journeys through Egypt and across the Sinai desert) the PHR strike was leveraging migrant bodies as a strategy to communicate the severity of the health crisis at hand.

In her ethnography of “biological citizenship” being enacted in post-disaster Chernobyl, Petryna showed how victims of a state-sponsored nuclear project took part in the “opening and reconfiguration of the political process through their biological conditions” (2002:118). By making visible their sick bodies, people sought to expand their rights and become relevant in the public realm. Fassin has described a similar process in his study of the role of medical practitioners and asylum seekers in France who collaborated to produce the documentation that was necessary for asylum seekers to obtain refugee status. These migrants showed their scars to doctors in order to substantiate stories of torture or abuse. As they “use[d] their biology rather than their biography as a resource to win the right to exist” (Fassin 2005:372), they were not just obtaining documents but also cultivating a particular form of engagement with the host society, specifically, one in which their body was central to who they were and how they were perceived.

This kind of bodily engagement, however, was problematic when it came only at the expense of other types of engagement, that is, when the “phenomenal materiality of [migrant women’s] bodies became such that their subject-being [was] overwhelmed by their corporeality” (Tormey 2007:81) In the cases of Lupe and the PHR patients, their

bodies were hyper-visible while their personal stories and political needs were essentially invisible. Indeed these forms of visibility and invisibility mutually reinforced one another, particularly for illegalized pregnant women whose overwhelming corporeality was promoted, first, by the lack of bureaucratic categories that existed for them in Tel Aviv's medical bureaucracies and, second, by the strategies employed by non-governmental agents who put migrant bodies front and centre in debates over resources.

#### Physical (in)visibility: Gender, race and the marking of migrant bodies

As we've seen in both Lupe's case and the PHR strike, the deliberate use of migrants' bodies and/or biologies has often relied on the physical manifestations of biological conditions. Migrant women with large bellies, for example, became visible as pregnant women in need of pre-natal care, while migrant men and women with sores and scars on their skin became visible as sick and contagious individuals in need of urgent treatment. These examples beg for elaboration, however, as the hyper-visibility of migrants' corporeality was inseparable from the symbolism and cultural context that particular corporealities conjured up for the general public. Put simply, migrants' bodies were not just highly visible, but also gendered and racialized as such. Their physical characteristics as women and non-whites were significant elements of the ways in which they were seen, as well as their own 'ways of seeing' and 'ways of being seen'. In this section, I explore physical (in)visibility as a set of processes that are uneven, power-laden and exemplary of migrants' interdependent engagement with the structures and ideologies that governed life in Tel Aviv.



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Bailey et al. has labelled the practices of Salvadorian migrants with irregular status in the United States a form of “strategic visibility” (2002:136) in which migrants related to one another and with government institutions in “carefully selected ways at particular moments” (2002:136). The migrants’ goal was to maximize control over their otherwise precarious situations, that is, to be able to determine where they could live, with whom, and for how long. The decision to appear or not to appear at refugee hearings, political meetings and interviews for research projects, were thus considered part of migrants’ broader objective of effectively managing or controlling “the structural context of daily life” (138) in the limited ways that were available to them. Illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv, together with their political allies, employed similar forms of strategic visibility. Migrants either highlighted or concealed their physical characteristics according to the perceived significance or utility of such characteristics, specifically with respect to the related structural conditions of employment and residency.

#### *Pregnant migrant bodies*

For example, Lupe’s comment that her rounded belly was a central point of her sense of security in Tel Aviv, demonstrated her awareness of the instrumental aspects of her body. In this case, that her pregnant body differentiated her from other migrants. As noted above, her pregnancy signaled to Tel Aviv deportation authorities the combined message that she was more physically vulnerable than others and, also, more threatening because of the potential media that would surround her detention. Lupe told me on several occasions, and in various ways, that even though they weren’t “good” about

giving her a seat on the bus, her pregnancy generally made her feel as if Israelis sympathized with, cared about, and even respected her. Indeed, while I sometimes heard Israelis refer to illegalized pregnant women in unsympathetic terms, this was in fact quite rare. It was more common, as Lupe noticed herself, for people to view pregnant, illegalized women as objects of interest or as people in need of care. Then, when possible, Lupe deliberately “performed” her pregnancy by wearing clothing that emphasized her belly and made her physical condition as apparent as possible.

Both scholarly and journalistic writings on illegalized life in Tel Aviv have addressed the trend of migrant women understanding and using their pregnant bodies as a defense against being caught by the deportation police (see Willen 2005). At earlier periods in the history of deportation raids in Tel Aviv, this phenomenon was known colloquially as “below seven” - referring to the tendency of women who were pregnant to remain hidden from view until their seventh month, when the pregnancy had become obvious and the risk of being detained or deported had been greatly reduced (Mitnik 2004).

In the period during which I conducted my research, illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv did consider their pregnancies as strategic elements of their self-presentation. Women did not, however, uniformly display their pregnancies. Indeed, it was as common for women to hide or make invisible their pregnancies for the purpose of retaining employment, as it was for women to make those pregnancies visible for the purpose of avoiding deportation. As we saw in the previous chapter, Estella tried to conceal her growing belly for as long as possible from her employers, not only because she wanted to

keep her job but also because keeping her job would allow her to accumulate the necessary number of months of health insurance that would later cover some of the costs of her giving birth. Even though her employers were (according to the law) not able to fire her simply for being pregnant and, further, were legally bound to pay into the insurance plan for the period of her employment, Estella either did not fully understand or trust the effectiveness of the law to protect her. In maintaining the physical invisibility of her pregnancy (by wearing loose, concealing clothing, as she explained to me one day), Estella was exercising an ability to manage or control her situation. Like the Salvadorian migrants in Bailey et al.'s study (2002), she was making a part of herself physically invisible in order to manipulate the structural context of her employment in a way that would suit her needs.

In Castañeda's study (2008), illegalized migrant women in Germany demonstrated similar strategies of (in)visibility, even under circumstances which could be considered more forgiving than those that existed in Tel Aviv. In part, Castañeda's research explored Germany's official (although not always operationalized) commitment to "maternity protection" (2008:347), which offered illegalized pregnant women and new mothers immunity from deportation during the period in which they were most "fragile" (six weeks before they give birth and eight weeks after) (2008:348). It was precisely because of the bureaucratic visibility that illegalized women obtained through that protection, however, that led some women to not register their pregnancies and to hide their pregnant bodies. Castañeda found that women's strategic decisions to keep their pregnancies invisible were based on their perception that they would have more personal control over

their circumstances if they did not engage with state institutions and the subsequent inevitable surveillance (ie. bureaucratic visibility) that such engagement might entail. Estella applied a similar logic to her own case. Although she did not have a clear long term plan, she believed that keeping her pregnancy hidden for as long as possible from employers, as well as from her contact at the employment agency, would give her the power to choose when and how she would terminate her own employment.

Estella and Lupe's respective methods for dealing with their pregnancies demonstrated how these women utilized their physical bodies in strategic ways. Depending on an individual's particular needs, different tactics were perceived as useful and employed as such. In both cases, the gendered bodies and sexualities of migrant women were on display in such a way that, like illegalized African migrant women in Tormey's study of Irish citizenship, they participated in a "performative materiality of bodily difference" (2007:81). This representation or performance of their bodily conditions "came to speak louder than words" (ibid.), particularly for women whose invisibility in other areas of their lives rendered their bodies the most useful instrument of communication and/or control over their employment and residency status.

The key point in understanding strategic (in)visibility in Tel Aviv is therefore not only that women chose different strategies to make their pregnancies physically (in)visible, but that *all* of these choices and strategies were shaped by the structural context in which the women were living, putting migrant women in an intimate relationship with Israeli state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic/administrative and socio-cultural expectations. Specifically, migrant women's bodies and choices about

their bodies were heavily scrutinized by the combined forces of the labour market, the deportation regime, and the financial pressure of living in Tel Aviv without status. Further, this scrutiny was not only passive but active, causing women's bodies to be partially defined and conditioned by government and media discourses on policies surrounding migration.

While neither Estella nor Lupe articulated what they believed were the broader implications of their (in)visibility as illegalized, pregnant women in Tel Aviv, I knew from talking with them that they were highly attuned to the media reports, and the general interest surrounding the birth of illegalized children at the time of their pregnancies. Their strategies and decisions regarding their own bodies were therefore constructed in relation to the structural context, sometimes in accordance with that structure and sometimes as a way to be subversive within it. This relationship, carried out through women's interactions with Israeli citizens and institutions, constituted a politics of intimacy through which the condition of visible invisibility was produced and maintained.

### *Racialized migrant bodies*

Of course, it was not only rounded bellies that made illegalized women's bodies important objects of scrutiny. Lupe and women like her also had to contend with the (in)visibility of a pregnant body that was not white. As Tormey (2007) has cogently argued, while race goes largely unstated and is covered up through a rhetoric of morality or demography, it remains a major aspect of the ways in which migrants and migrant issues have become important to the public and to policy makers. In Tel Aviv, this was no

different. As the proliferation of black, and especially Filipina, pregnant bodies became a common sight in some parts of the city, the already sensitive topic of what to do with migrants' children was exacerbated by questions regarding the new racial dynamics that these pregnancies were in the process of introducing.

Although the racialization of Palestinians, Arabs and Jews from different parts of the world has shaped Tel Aviv and Israel as a whole for decades, the migration of non-Jews from Asia and Africa has introduced a new layer onto this racial map (see Kemp 2004 and Yacobi 2011 for analyses of how the labour market and space are integral to this process). It is important, in the context of a discussion on physical (in)visibility, to acknowledge the role that phenotype has on this process of racialization, particularly in the context of urban Israel.

A friend of mine, who had grown up in Tel Aviv in the 1980s, told me that he could remember the first time in his life that he ever saw a black person. The sight was so unusual and so out of place for him at the time that he, as a child, asked his parents to explain to him why this person looked so different from any of the other people he had ever seen. Other Israelis I knew related how they could remember clearly the first times in their lives that they saw Southeast Asian people, explaining that the Eastern European, South American or South Asian workers who they saw in Tel Aviv often looked like Jewish Israelis, but that the Filipino and Thai workers were especially noticeable when they first began migrating. For me, the frequency and casual nature of these comments built up a picture of the apparent, relative homogeneity of Tel Aviv society in the years preceding the first influx of "foreign workers" and other non-Jewish migrants.

In her work on migrants in Tel Aviv, Willen recounted hearing similar comments from Israeli citizens, describing the in-migration of non-Jewish migrants, who did not have origins in Europe or the Middle East, as a “shock to the Israeli cultural system” (2007:15). While Israelis and Palestinians are ethnically different from one another, and ethnically diverse within their respective populations, they nevertheless tended to be seen by Israelis as having general, phenotypical characteristics that have always made clear who is local and who is foreign. Willen’s point was that looking different was extremely significant to migrants’ experiences of everyday life in Israel, as it meant that, at all times and in all situations, they carried with them an indication of their non-belonging (2007:15). In the context of deportation raids and random inspections of people’s documents on the street that Willen observed, phenotype mattered.

It has also long been true, and more so in recent years, that in the relatively diverse city of Tel Aviv, all visible differences are not created equal. This is to say that all migrants who were living in Tel Aviv during my fieldwork, were not equally able to choose or be strategic about their (in)visibility. Kalir has noted the importance of “bodily capital” (2010:5) for Latino migrants in Tel Aviv as affecting their ability to blend into Israeli society. Whereas black Africans could only sometimes be seen to resemble Israelis (particularly given seeming phenotypical similarities between Jewish Ethiopians and non-Jewish Eritreans), and while East or Southeast Asians hardly ever could be seen to resemble Israelis, Latinos in Kalir’s study, and in my own field experience, benefitted from having a phenotype that seemed to resemble that of many Israelis. Latinos also knowingly cultivated this form of capital by more frequently dressing and cutting their

hair in styles that were common in Tel Aviv. This “phenotypical invisibility” (Kalir 2010:5) of Latino migrants was partly correlated with their acceptance by Israelis who viewed them, above and beyond other groups of migrants, as more culturally like Israelis, more able to assimilate, and with a presence that was “less striking in public spaces” (Shnell, quoted in Kalir 2010:5).

On the other hand, some groups in Israel were especially visible as Others. Their hyper-visibility in physical terms was multi-faceted. It was not simply that they lacked the bodily capital of Latino migrants, but that they explicitly expressed their cultural and class differences through the ways in which they dressed and presented themselves. Eritrean and Sudanese migrants were particularly noticeable owing to the tendency of women to cover their heads, most often with a thin scarf draped over top their heads and across their necks. The men were visible through classic markers of poverty such as old and torn clothing and, in the worst cases, the appearance of being physically ill.

Further exploration of the PHR strike and the subsequent settlement of African asylum seekers in Tel Aviv demonstrates the ways in which migrants’ and migrant allies’ strategies of physical (in)visibility, or managing the way in which they are ‘seen’, have clashed with processes of racialization in Tel Aviv society. These clashes have taken place in the media, in government rhetoric, in public space and in language. For example, any success attributed to the PHR strike was described by clinic staff to me as a “triumph of numbers”; in other words, that the pressure which was applied through political action reached and impacted on a lot of people. According to those who worked at the clinic before and after its closing, as hospitals became overwhelmed with groups of migrants all



arriving at once, many of the staff and patients came to support PHR's stance and to join with them in the struggle to lobby the Ministries of Health and of Finance to rectify the situation of migrants' lack of full healthcare. It was the visibility of the problem both in the media and in hospital waiting rooms that caused people to take enough notice so as to apply pressure on the government. Part of this visibility was the fact that the majority of migrants who showed up at the hospitals were black Africans, many of whom suffered from chicken pox and other skin problems that they had acquired in camps in the Sinai Desert on their way to Israel, or in detention facilities, shelters or interim housing in Israel.<sup>26</sup> Because of how they looked and the scars that they bore on their bodies, migrants who filled the hospitals during the strike were, in Kalir's terms, highly phenotypically visible. These migrants were also highly racialized, as their phenotype and social circumstances were conflated in the category of 'diseased black refugee'.

As asylum seekers began to enter Israel through its southern border in greater numbers from 2007 onward, these migrants became a more visible presence throughout the country and in Tel Aviv in particular. By 2009, Eritrean and Sudanese (mostly male) migrants could regularly be seen congregating in city parks and/or sitting in groups in the sparse, largely unlicensed bars and restaurants that lined the streets leading to the Central Bus Station. Two related, discursive processes occurred in this period. First, many Israelis, particularly those who lived in areas where migrants were settling, began to

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<sup>26</sup> A "major aspect" of the clinic closure, at least equal to if not more pressing than the desire to apply political pressure on the Ministry of Finance, was concern on the part of volunteer physicians over public health issues including break-outs of skin diseases in the shelters where asylum seekers and other migrants were living and the spreading of these conditions within the clinic itself (personal communication, Ran Cohen, Dec. 8, 2010)

generalize the category of diseased black refugee to include any migrant with black skin. That is, despite the notable differences in dress mentioned above, migrants from West African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire who had gone to Israel on tourist visas and who had stayed to work, were grouped discursively with migrants from Eritrea and Sudan who had fled or been trafficked to Israel in order to claim asylum. Second, the category of diseased black refugee itself expanded to accommodate the growing perception among Israelis that all black migrants, and, to a lesser extent, all non-white migrants, were criminals who drained the healthcare and welfare systems, operated "illegal" businesses and endangered society through their illness and immorality.

The use of the term "*kushim*"<sup>27</sup> shows the overlap between these two processes. The word "*kushi*" for a single male, "*kushit*" for a single female, and "*kushim*" for plural, literally means from the Kush (sometimes spelled Cush) region and originates from the Old Testament in which the Land of Kush referred to the area in and around what is now Ethiopia. Commonly used in Israel as a derogatory way to refer to black people, "*kushi*" was, unsurprisingly, the word that came to be most commonly applied to African migrants, especially by pro-deportation activists and supporters. What was somewhat surprising was the ways in which this slur was used by migrants themselves. The meaning that the word took on among migrants, both those who were black and those who were not, are descriptive of processes of racialization in this context.

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<sup>27</sup> The term "*kushi*" has a derogatory connotation in Hebrew, sometimes likened to the English word "nigger", and as such will appear in this dissertation only in quotation marks and only in instances in which it was used directly.

For example, Nigerians, Ghanaians, and other West African migrants whom I met during 2009-2011, made explicit efforts to distinguish themselves from asylum seekers and “infiltrators” as East Africans came to be known. A Nigerian man whom I knew from my work at the clinic, complained to me one evening that “Israelis think we are all ‘*kushim*’, but really it is only the refugees who are causing problems and doing criminal activity”. This reference to social problems and criminality as a clear link to what it meant to be a “*kushi*” in Tel Aviv, was a response to the moral panic that was developing among Israelis regarding what they perceived as rising rates of gang activity, alcoholism, theft, prostitution and even murder in the South Tel Aviv neighbourhoods where many asylum seekers lived.

My Nigerian friend was correct to assume that Israelis, as well as other migrants, conflated social problems and criminality with blackness. I was constantly warned by migrants whom I knew and were living in South Tel Aviv, that I should be careful of the blacks or “*kushim*”. My Burmese and Nepali migrant friends used these terms interchangeably and always with reference to potential danger, unpredictability or immorality. While I never heard of any criminal activity in their neighbourhoods during my fieldwork, apart from the occasional bicycle being stolen, I nevertheless relented to my friends’ insistence on walking me to and from bus stops, or driving me home from evenings we spent together.

The racialization of black migrants on the part of non-black migrants was particularly surprising to me because the terms and processes of racialization, including but not limited to the use of the term “*kushi*”, were so closely linked to the pro-

deportation rhetoric that was aimed at *all* migrants, regardless of the colour of their skin or their country of origin. As the Interior Minister famously commented to the television program, Meet the Press: "If hundreds of thousands of migrant workers come here now, they will bring with them a profusion of diseases: hepatitis, measles, tuberculosis, AIDS and drug [addiction]..." (*Haaretz*, 2009). The naming of "migrant workers" in this statement, a term general enough to refer to non-Jewish foreigners from anywhere in the world, and a term with a range of possible legal statuses, was no doubt deliberate.

Minister Yishai, staunchly pro-deportation, was embroiled at the time in a battle for the hearts and minds of Tel Aviv residents who were mobilizing on behalf of the children of migrant workers. His point, that all non-Jewish foreigners could be subsumed under one term and should be understood as uniformly dangerous and/or uniformly inferior to citizens, was part of an attempt to harness the more broad-based support for curbing the influx of asylum seekers from Ethiopia and Sudan and to apply this support to the cause of deporting non-Jewish migrants. Indeed, Yishai and his supporters were able to do this over the course of 2009, 2010 and beyond, as the pro-deportation campaign took on decidedly racist tones. Speeches about migrants' threatening presence in Tel Aviv as drunks, rapists, thieves and murderers began to proliferate in the media and in political rhetoric. But these forms of racialization were not just discursive. My interactions with independent brokers who rented out apartments in the area of South Tel Aviv demonstrated how this racialization created an environment in which some migrants' physical, and specifically phenotypical, visibility in Tel Aviv, had actual effects on their ability to secure cheap and reliable housing.

On returning to Tel Aviv in 2010 for a second, but brief, period of fieldwork, I was faced with the task of finding a short-term apartment rental. I had decided to find a place in one of the southern neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv, close to many of the migrant friends I had already made, and to the numerous events, protests and parties that I had attended in the months leading up to that point. Starting from the Central Bus Station, I had the choice of countless apartment rental services all along Levinsky Street to the west and along the pedestrian street of Nave Sha'anun jutting out directly north of the station.

The rental offices, located in dilapidated and unmarked storefronts, were recognizable only by their front windows. Each was covered with several small white and red paper houses, and each house had Hebrew, English or Tagalog text hand-written on them describing how many rooms and how many shekels the available rentals would be. The offices were similarly uniform inside. Most had two or three desks, piled with papers, cell phones, cigarettes, coffee mugs, and old fax machines, and occupied by Israeli men in their 40s or 50s. I recognized from the men's own dark skin and form of dress that they were residents of the neighbourhoods themselves and most likely *Mizrahi* (Eastern) Jews.

Appearing severe at first, these men always softened when I walked through the door. One speculated about whether or not a "good girl" like me should even be renting an apartment in that part of town. "Maybe since you are from Toronto where there are a million blacks, it won't bother you that much", said one. Several of them told me that each rental involved a "commission" that amounted to an extra month's rent, but that they were willing to make exceptions to this rule for someone as "nice" as me. Yossi, a dark-haired man in his 50s, was explicit about his eagerness to have me as a tenant. He ushered

me through a one-room apartment in the Shapira neighbourhood which was still under construction. Yossi nevertheless assured me that the space could be made available for me quickly, “*Chik chak*...in a week or so, maybe two or three”. He then brought me back to the main office where his colleague Shmuel, a friendly and paunchy man in his 60s, told him to “Bring me more like her”. Yossi leveled with me as I was leaving, “You are not Arab, black or Filipino. You are the tenant we want, so be in touch.”

Over the course of two weeks I had a dozen conversations with rental property brokers throughout the Southern neighbourhoods. I was always given the same reasoning for their overt preference for me (a white, Jewish, Canadian woman) over non-Jewish non-white migrants from Africa or Asia. According to Yossi, Shmuel and others, I would certainly be the kind of tenant who was “nice”, “sweet” and “good”, whereas “*kushim*” were more likely to “cause problems” or “be trouble” due to their excessive drinking and the likelihood that they would live “ten or twenty to a room”.<sup>28</sup> That rental brokers relied so heavily on a moralization of migrants’ behaviour indicates the quality and power of racialization of migrant bodies in this context. If I could get an apartment quickly and without the “commission” fee because of how “nice”, I appeared to the brokers, then it followed that racialized migrants, who appeared much less “nice” would likely have to wait longer, pay more, or simply be rejected from renting altogether. As Tormey has written about the Irish case: “[C]onfigured upon, and therefore experienced as a type of body, immorality becomes an alibi for race and is naturalized as a form of exclusion”

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<sup>28</sup> The relationship between migrants (especially men from Sudan and Eritrea) and the long-term residents of South Tel Aviv who were their landlords and neighbours became particularly fraught during my fieldwork, and in the year that followed. I address this theme in detail in Chapter Six.

(2007:69). In the case of Tel Aviv, immorality and blackness were conflated in the term “*kushi*”, making the exclusion of particular migrants, and the justification for such exclusion, a process that was immediate and seamless.

Thus, while some non-racialized migrants could invest in their “bodily capital” (Kalir 2010:5) in order to reduce their physical visibility in Tel Aviv, others were “supra-visible” (Brighenti 2007:330) due to the racialization of their bodies on the part of Israelis and other migrants. Pregnant migrant women, particularly those who were also racialized, were similarly “supra-visible” in Tel Aviv, a condition that produced mixed results. Women could either emphasize or conceal their pregnancies, depending on the perceived benefit of those choices and the strategies of (in)visibility that they wished to employ. At a certain point, however, this choice was no longer theirs. Migrant bodies were gendered and racialized according to socio-cultural expectations that were prevalent in Tel Aviv at the time. The management of physical (in)visibility was therefore a significant aspect of the politics of intimacy in this context, as it explains one way in which illegalized migrants were shaped by Israeli structures and ideologies.

#### Political (in)visibility: Media, performance, and articulations of migrant life

The field of political (in)visibility provides an example of the interdependence of this relationship, specifically the ways in which migrants’ ways of seeing and ways of being seen in public were highly politicized processes that spoke back to Israeli state and government policies and socio-cultural expectations, even as they were powerfully determined by such policies and expectations. Migrants’ representation in the news, in

entertainment media, and in public life demonstrated that the anti-deportation campaign, including the struggle for migrants' rights, was becoming a part of mainstream Tel Aviv culture. How this representation looked, however, told the story of the particular ways in which migrants were controlling or relinquishing control of such incorporation.

When I arrived at *Mesila*, the municipally-funded, service centre for migrants in Tel Aviv, Nora was standing in the entrance to the building, propping the door open with her foot, and writing frantically on a clipboard. There was a crowd of people in the narrow courtyard just in front of the door. Some snacks were set up on a picnic bench, and a faint hum of singing filled the space. I had come that evening to see the auditions for *Kochav Nolad* (A Star is Born), an Israeli version of the popular reality television show and amateur singing contest, *American Idol*. *Mesila* was always a busy place, but on this particular night the atmosphere was especially electric.

I had heard from Nora and others earlier in the week that for this year's show, the franchise's eighth season, producers were interested in gleaning performers from what they called the "migrant community". The production team had asked *Mesila* to host open auditions, and *Mesila* in turn had approached Nora to help advertise and organize the process. I spoke to executive producer Tamira Yardeni when she was on a break from judging the auditions. A small but abrasive woman, Yardeni spoke quickly and excitedly in heavily accented English. She told me that she and the team of judges were not looking for actual contestants for the show (who, according to the rules, had to be citizens and had to sing exclusively in Hebrew). Rather, the producers wanted "someone that can sing or do something" to perform intermittently throughout the competition.



For 2010, Yardeni told me, they felt that, as a “high-rating show, we should focus on these [illegalized] people, these children...so maybe we can help...to connect people to the face of the children.” Yardeni, who was also the owner of Teddy Productions, the company that produced *Kochav Nolad* as well as other popular Israeli television shows, said a few times that she hadn’t been sure what she could do. Because it was a show that focused only on entertainment, it had been unclear what its role could be in promoting the anti-deportation cause. When I followed up on one of these comments by asking if *Kochav Nolad* had been “political” in the past, Yardeni balked and emphatically shook her head “No”. “Never. I’m not going to say it’s political. It’s humane, it’s something else...for the children...Its not political because it’s not against anybody, but for them.”

Later, I asked Nora what she thought about both the auditions and the show. She said that she felt that the presence of migrants on the show (in whatever capacity) would benefit the cause because it would humanize migrant workers and their children. “It will be a big help to all our community that they can discover all the talents of our community...and not just that they clean houses.” Ironically, just as she said this, Nora was pulled aside by a friend, told something in Tagalog, and immediately returned to the clipboard she had been holding to cross out a name. She explained to me that it had been extremely difficult for her to make and maintain the list of auditions, considering the fact that people were going to *Mesila* “on break” from their jobs. “It’s a working day for us”, she told me, “and most people don’t have the flexibility to wait around”. The audition times had been rearranged and delayed several times, she told me, and she was trying her best to accommodate everyone’s work schedule.

While there was certainly a heightened air of excitement at the *Kochav Nolad* auditions, this was only one of several instances during my fieldwork when migrants were engaged in public performance and spectacle. Over the course of that year, migrants whom I knew participated in various singing, dancing and beauty pageants as well as in culturally-themed variety shows. These were organized, run and funded by groups of artists and arts foundations, local celebrities and the Tel Aviv municipality, all of which promoted their events as celebrations of diversity and/or ways for (Israeli citizen) residents of the city to “get to know” migrants and their communities (Image A). Migrants often viewed their chance to dress up in costumes (sometimes ethnically or nationally-themed) and to display elements of their cultural backgrounds as a way to showcase talents that would otherwise not be noticed or appreciated, and to make clear their desire for citizenship. In the words of Hermina Ocampo, the host of the 2009 Miss Twinkle Star Beauty and Folklore Competition – a pageant for Filipinos in Tel Aviv – competitions such as these allowed Filipinos to “...show the decision makers that we have something to offer and to contribute to the country...I hope that they will recognize our many talents and that it will touch their hearts, and they will understand that all of us here are Israeli” (Ocampo 2009). Just as Nora perceived the *Kochav Nolad* auditions as an opportunity to make visible the fact that migrants don’t “just clean houses”, so did migrants in various performance contexts see their singing, dancing and pageantry as resonating in ways that went beyond the performance itself.



Image A: “We are the World, Multinational Culture Show” 2010 - Tel Aviv, Israel; One example of public festivals and exhibitions that featured migrants as performers.

In an ethnographic exploration of cultural performance among migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, Lai explored the ways in which performance (singing, dancing, discursive and non-discursive entertainment) is an underestimated but significant element of migrants’ “public articulation” (2010:502). Specifically, these performances were the media through which migrants expressed solidarity with other political, ethnic or labour groups as well as with their own group. Such performed cohesion had the potential to mobilize people for the purpose of claiming rights. According to Lai, performances have been “central” to migrant activism, pulling domestic workers from the homes in which they work and out of the acute public invisibility that characterizes their lives (2010:505).

In Tel Aviv, the *Kochav Nolad* initiative and auditions, as well as other cultural performances and media portrayals of migrant life, were similarly part of a type of activism in which migrants and their allies strategically attempted to place migrants’ personalities, life stories, and struggles for rights in the public eye. But as my

observations of the *Kochav Nolad* auditions have indicated, migrants' participation was largely dependent first, on the specific needs and regulations of the producers of the performance (in this case, both the invitation to audition for *Kochav Nolad* and the restriction that migrants not be full contestants on the show), and, second, on migrants' ability to alter their own schedules (in this case, both work and childcare activities) in order to participate in the performance. This was true, albeit in different degrees, both for performances that were organized by Israeli citizens such as the *Kochav Nolad* auditions, as well as for performances that were organized by migrants themselves, such as the Miss Twinkle Star Pageant.

Migrant performances in Tel Aviv therefore constituted what Brighenti has called a "media-type visibility scheme" in which "subjects are taken out of their original context and projected into a different one endowed with its own logic and rules" (2007:339), either by the subjects themselves or by another agent. In other words, as "public articulations" (Lai 2010:502), these performances were only partial. The logic and rules according to which they operated involved highlighting certain migrants, certain aspects of migrant life and certain right's discourses while simultaneously obscuring others. The process of both highlighting and obscuring (making visible and making invisible) migrants and their life circumstances, is another example of a politics of intimacy. Illegalized migrants engaged with Israeli state, government, bureaucratic institutions and socio-cultural expectations, as they performed and embodied particular aspects of what it meant to belong in that context and at that time.

*Articulations at work: Visible children, invisible adults*

In this section, I explore two overlapping elements of the logic and rules that framed migrant performance in Tel Aviv. The first element of this logic was putting children front and centre while obscuring their adult parents. The second element was in emphasizing what was commonly referred to as the “humanitarian”, rather than “political” objectives for performance. My exploration also shows how, beyond being just entertainment, migrant performances or “public articulations” (Lai 2010:502) were exemplary moments of the intimate condition that being both visible and invisible created and perpetuated. I draw on the example of the *Kochav Nolad* auditions, as well as two additional media products created for the anti-deportation campaign, in order to describe how these performances and public articulations are representative of migrants’ relationship with Israeli structures and ideologies.

Late in the summer of 2009, just as the anti-deportation campaign was getting under way, a group of activists and photographers initiated a project to photograph as many of the children who had been slated for deportation as they could manage to contact. The children were not formally posed during the shoot. Rather they were told to come in their own clothing, to stand in front of a white background, and they were encouraged by their parents and the photographers to behave naturally. The resulting images were beautiful. Several captured distinct elements of the subjects’ personalities as they portrayed the children laughing, joking, making silly faces or, alternatively, standing still, glancing furtively at the camera, or looking shy.

In early October, the activists chose a few of the photos which they liked the best, printed “deported” in the iconic image of a red stamp across each one, wrote the child’s name in Hebrew in the top right corner, blew the images up to a full-page size, and scattered copies all over the city. For at least a day and a night, the photos blanketed Tel Aviv. They were stapled next to concert posters and advertisements on telephone posts, fences, walls and bulletin boards of small businesses (Image B). They were taped to car windshields, benches, windows and metal poles. I first came across them one morning when I walked out of my apartment and stepped on a photo with the image of a child I came to know quite well over the next year. I watched my neighbours and other passersby do the same, pausing to look at what they had stumbled over before taking the photos out from under their feet or off their windshields, throwing them out and moving on with the rest of their day.



Image B: Anti-deportation photo campaign  
2009 - Tel Aviv, Israel

Later that month, I attended a fundraising exhibit in which the entire series of original photographs were plaque-mounted, hung on a gallery wall, and put up for sale. The event had been organized by the recently established activist group, *Israeli Children*, and it took place in a gallery space called “Contemporary” located in an industrial but newly gentrifying part of town. Politicians and media personnel were invited as were the mothers of the children and the children themselves who together performed a song, a few dances and acrobatic acts for the crowd of close to two hundred attendees. While the event was constructed as a promotion of the anti-deportation cause in general terms, the photographs were the centre-point of the event. Each was displayed on one of the white brick walls of the gallery and accompanied by short biographies of the child featured in the photograph (Images C and D). The biographies included the child’s name, hobbies, likes and dislikes, favourite subjects in school and whether or not he or she had siblings. Each photograph was on sale for a suggested donation of 300 NIS (approximately eighty-five Canadian dollars). All proceeds were being directed to the activist group and its efforts to build the anti-deportation campaign.



Image C: Photo exhibit, ‘Contemporary’ gallery    Image D: Photo exhibit  
2009 - Tel Aviv, Israel

A second photography initiative, carried out in the fall of 2010, also organized by *Israeli Children* and even more prolific than the first, featured a series of large posters that were put up around the city. Each poster portrayed a single Israeli member of the group interacting with one of the children who was slated for deportation. The captions used the real names of both the Israeli citizen and the child, attesting to the fact, for example, that 'Elisheva doesn't want Evelyn to be deported' or 'Matan doesn't want Joseph to be deported'. These photos were also not posed but taken in urban settings where the (Israeli) adult and (illegalized) child could interact naturally. Most featured the pair interacting playfully, or else hugging one another and looking at the camera.

It bears mention here, and in any discussion of the activist group, *Israeli Children*, that individual activists who worked with the group against the deportation campaign were keenly aware of the complexity and nuance of their strategic choices in portraying illegalized children in a particular light. Many members of *Israeli Children* openly critiqued the partial and apolitical representations of migrant issues in the media, as they simultaneously debated the merits of making compromises in their own activist and advocacy work (for example, focussing on children over their parents or other illegalized migrant adults). As the anti-deportation campaign entered into mainstream Israeli culture, largely due to the efforts of the activists who started *Israeli Children*, the group was faced with proposals from numerous individuals and organizations wanting to collaborate with them on activities, actions, programs and performances. Activists' reflections over the standards that they wanted to apply to these collaborations, including how much they



were willing to dilute so-called “political” messages in order to promote their cause widely, were consistently voiced in early group meetings. These discussions demonstrated that the core group of activists with *Israeli Children* were acutely aware of the possible implications of their choices, even as they actively courted an Israeli mainstream that they knew to be less critical of immigration policy than they were.

How the children were portrayed in the *Israeli Children* photo campaigns and how the photographs were disseminated and to whom became powerful markers of a trend that persisted throughout the year of the anti-deportation campaign. Government, media, activists and the children’s parents focused intently on the children, putting them, images of them, and information about them on display in public events related to the deportation debate. The effect of this emphasis on children increased their political visibility as individuals and as a group. It simultaneously, however, created a narrative around childhood that separated children from other illegalized individuals and groups, and from key issues in policy deliberations that were taking place over non-Jewish migration to Israel more generally.

Adults, including but not limited to the children’s parents, were all but absent from the discursive and visual representations of the public debate over deportation that ran from 2009-2011 and beyond.<sup>29</sup> Although this focus on the children clearly emerged

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<sup>29</sup> Information or advocacy surrounding the rights of adult migrants, illegalized workers, or the parents of the children themselves were so invisible in the public realm that a common question posed to me in private conversations which I had with friends over the course of my research was what would be done about the children’s mothers once the children were deported - as if the deportation of illegalized children was not directly related to the deportation of those childrens’ mothers.

from the fact that it was the children who were specifically targeted in the deportation order issued that year, the extreme visibility of the children in contrast with the almost complete invisibility of adults was curious considering the obvious tie between motherhood and a child's status in the country (that is, the "baby or visa" regulation described in the previous chapter), and considering political-economic logic that would suggest that illegalized adults should be a priority over illegalized children. For example, while the government identified 1,200 illegalized children of migrant workers in 2009, estimates for the population of illegalized migrant adults were as high as 100,000 for the same year. That the children became visible as the clear focal point for anti-deportation activism could therefore be attributed to factors beyond a logic of numbers.

As was mentioned above, the children's heightened visibility was, rather, mediated by a different logic, that is, a set of rules specific to the context in which it occurred. In this case that logic can be described as emanating from a liberal Western ethos, expressed by individuals and organizations who came to support the anti-deportation campaign, that illegalized children embodied innocence, vulnerability, the need for help and the potential to be integrated into Israeli society. Liisa Malkki's commentary on the disproportionate use of children's images in the "overall visual representation of displacement" (1995:11) references a similar ethos to the one described here. She explored how children are a "crucial element in the representation of refugees" for international agencies dealing with asylum seekers and refugees and in policy-oriented, therapeutic literature on refugees (1995:11). Indeed, the child has come to represent basic humanity, inviting a "global community" to take responsibility for his or

her care (Malkki 2010:58). The image of the refugee child, in particular, conveys a classic form of helplessness, a lack of agency, and a need and desire for outside intervention, not just from their parents but from any and all adults who may consider themselves contributors to this humanity (1995:11). Two outcomes of promoting the image of the child are, therefore, that the conditions under which those children, and all disadvantaged humans live, are identified as “apolitical, even suprapolitical” despite both their political causes and effects (2010:59). Second, actors (usually white actors from wealthy, industrialized countries) implement so-called humanitarian *instead of* political interventions on their behalf.

Both of these outcomes were evident in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011.

Representations of children’s innocence, vulnerability and potential for integration promoted the idea of the children as the basic units of humanity, a process that differentiated them from adult migrants. First, talk of innocence emphasized that the children could not be held accountable for their parents having chosen to have them under illegal circumstances. Numerous newspaper articles and speeches leveled criticisms against the Israeli government specifically on the grounds that they were mistreating or punishing “innocent” beings who had not chosen to break the law. Moriel Matalon, chairman of the Israel branch of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and a supporter of the anti-deportation campaign, echoed this sentiment, stating publically that “[I]t’s unjustified to put the children with their parents in jail or in prison, even for a temporary period of time...These children have committed no crime whatsoever” (Matalon, quoted in Kestler-D’Amours 2011). Implicit in this comment, as in others on

the children's lack of responsibility for where they were born, was that the children's parents had in fact chosen to break the law. While, in more general terms, Matalon and other similar public figures were supportive of migrant workers' rights, in the context of the anti-deportation campaign his suggestion that it was unthinkable that children would go to jail (while the parents perhaps did belong there) at best ignored and at worst undermined the longer-term discourse on migrants' rights.<sup>30</sup>

Second, the children were presented as uniquely vulnerable to being uprooted, again unlike their parents or other adults whose abrupt deportations were perhaps more logical or acceptable. Advocates stressed how difficult and unfair it would be to send children away from the friends they had made at school and from the only home they had ever known. Politicians, in particular, but also public figures in the area of popular culture established illegalized children as vulnerable while simultaneously establishing Israeli citizens (particularly themselves) as the children's protectors. Making use of paternalistic language that encouraged Israelis to embrace the illegalized children as their own, or as children of the nation, they therefore suggested that children's vulnerability could be solved, albeit not by the migrant parents or community members who were present and active in the children's lives.

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<sup>30</sup> Another underlying element of emphasizing the children's innocence was the unspoken but implicit comparison of migrant worker children to Palestinian children. The topic of how Palestinian children are represented in the Israeli media is extensive and cannot be adequately addressed here. It is relevant to mention, however, that while some parallels exist between Palestinian and migrant worker children, specifically in the description of both groups as pawns, victims or puppets of their (criminal and/or dangerous) parents, Palestinian children are generally portrayed in Israeli media as potentially or imminently dangerous adults (Sait 2004). In contrast, migrant workers' children were more widely accepted – although, not entirely so – as future citizens who would contribute positively to Israeli society.

Third, the children were visible as ripe for integration into Israeli society. Particularly during the first round of photographic dissemination described above, where the children were photographed on a white background and taken completely out of their regular life contexts, it was the child as an individual – specifically an unformed individual - that was celebrated. As Malkki has noted of the refugee infant, the migrant worker’s child in Tel Aviv was presented as having “no consciousness of history, traditions, culture or nationality”, a *tabula rasa* on which such markers of identity could still be inscribed (1996:389).<sup>31</sup> The presence of family or community, extremely important to all of the children whom I met over the course of my fieldwork, was absent from the images conveyed by the deportation photos.

This decontextualization of the children’s lives as migrants simultaneously accompanied a recontextualization of them as Israelis. This sentiment echoed in the constant references to the children as “just like Israelis” or even “more Israeli than Israelis”. In July 2009, at the beginning of the anti-deportation campaign, President Peres wrote a letter to Interior Minister Yishai which he subsequently released to the press. Describing a recent visit to Bialik Rogozin, a South Tel Aviv elementary school that had in recent history become synonymous with the population of illegalized children who attend school there, Peres wrote, “I felt they had an appreciation for Israel, where they were born. I heard Hebrew ring naturally from their mouths. I felt their connection and their love for Israel and their desire to live in it, to serve in its army and to help to strengthen it” (Peres, quoted in Weiler-Polak 2009c). In this statement as in others like it,

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<sup>31</sup> How, and to what end, this inscription took place in the context of Tel Aviv, is a theme that is addressed in Chapter Five.

the children were described as vessels which were either already filled with Israeli culture, customs and ideals or else prepared to be filled in the future. In contrast with their parents or other adults, the children had all their potential (and youthful beauty) to offer, and yet no demands to make from the nation and its citizens apart from being included in its institutions, most notably the army.

The children's innocence, vulnerability and potential to integrate so endeared them to Israeli citizens that they were often presented as being "loved" by their teachers and neighbours and, indeed, by anyone who came into contact with them. The children's attractiveness, as children but also as potential citizens, was attributed again to individual (and not group) characteristics. Words like "beautiful", "charming", and/or "intelligent" were often used to describe the children in various situations. Similar language was almost never used to describe the mothers (much less the fathers)<sup>32</sup> of the children who, when mentioned, were usually positioned marginally and mostly as caretakers of the children or, occasionally, as martyrs who sacrificed their own well being for that of their children.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the most glaring, yet not unexpected, example of the invisibility of adults from the anti-deportation discussion was the omission of any representation of the fathers of the children. Such an omission was especially out of touch with the political context in those cases in which the father of the illegalized child was an Israeli citizen whose refusal to document his recognition of the children was itself the cause of their lack of citizenship status.

<sup>33</sup> An important exception to this rule was when women who worked as caregivers were described as being "loved" by their employers and/or their elderly wards. The expression of this sentiment, and its connection with caregivers being considered "part of the family", will be explored in detail in the next chapter. It is interesting to note here that the link between these two instances of illegalized mothers achieving high levels of visibility

*Visible humanitarianism, invisible politics*

The focus on children's innocence, vulnerability and integrative potential, and the accompanying occlusion of issues related to workers' rights or to those of illegalized adults, was embedded in a distinctive and sustained focus on "humanitarianism" over "politics" throughout the debate. Both the producer of *Kochav Nolad* and Nora addressed this distinction as they expressed their shared hope that the production would showcase migrants' human side while not getting mired in contentious political themes. Similarly, in his analysis of Israel's earlier (1999-2000) debate regarding access to healthcare for the children of illegalized workers, Paz observed that, in media and political rhetoric, the welfare of children was universally seen as a "humanitarian" concern while the broader policy possibilities of issuing coverage to all labour migrants was, in contrast, a "non-starter" (2010:209).

Discourse and practice surrounding the debate in 2009-2011 was hardly different from what Paz observed ten years before. At the photo exhibit described above, I observed a reporter for the Army radio station as she interviewed Avishay Braverman, a member of the Labor Party and an early and vocal supporter of the anti-deportation campaign. When the reporter asked about the possible implications of granting the children status, Braverman responded quickly and without hesitation. He stated that his stance on stopping the deportation of the children was a matter of humanitarianism and that other migrants had "nothing to do with it". Just a few days after the exhibit, in response to comments like Braverman's and to the policies and practices that supported

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was that they came to this visibility through their role as caretakers of others (either elderly wards or their own children).

them, a *Jerusalem Post* journalist issued a rare public critique of the distinction between the anti-deportation campaign as it applied to the children and the continued practices of deporting adults.

The widespread reports on the threats to deport 1,200 children of migrant workers born in Israel has somewhat eclipsed the immigration authority unit's ongoing work, but while there is a moratorium on the expulsion of the children, as far as adults are concerned it is business as usual. (Friedman, 2009)

Part of what allowed "business as usual" to proceed was the framing of the children's cause in humanitarian terms that either ignored or dismissed the possibility that helping the children ought to be rooted in altering policy or, at the very least, opening up channels for debate on long-standing political issues. Humanitarianism, as Ticktin and other anthropologists have observed, "keep[s] the political on the outside...do[ing] the work of the politics without its messiness" (2011:251). Thus, while it became common to hear, read about, or see representations of migrants' living situations, personal histories and hopes and dreams, only a small sector of what was called the "radical left" proposed discussion of the economy's increased dependence on illegal work, the state's lack of an immigration policy for non-Jews or indeed Palestinian refugees and *their* right to return or migrate to Israel and become Israeli citizens, all of which were indeed "messy" issues in this context. Ironically, the more that migrants and particularly children became visible in the media and a part of public discussion, the more the politics of migration, including its varied and widespread implications, faded into the background. Once again, visibility and invisibility were active processes that operated in tandem and mutually constituted one another, in this case, through the making visible of humanitarianism and the making invisible of politics.



The association that many Israelis, and particularly residents of Tel Aviv, have with “politics” is key to a discussion of its invisibility. Over the course of my fieldwork, I observed that “politics” was defined in mainstream Tel Aviv media and discourse as a singular entity representing something impossible, riddled with conflict and outside the realm of everyday life. Most often this definition came from the use of the word “politics” as a stand-in for references to Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and related issues concerning Palestinian sovereignty or Israel’s relationship to the United Nations and the broader international community. Tel Aviv’s widespread reputation as a “bubble” that is insulated from, and apathetic to, the conflicts that profoundly determine the country and its borders, was worn as a badge of honour by most city residents, including migrants, who claimed that they chose to live in Tel Aviv in order to be able to escape “politics” and to cultivate other aspects of their lives such as arts, culture and leisure. The separation of Tel Aviv and its residents from the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has always been illusory and fragile for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that Tel Aviv grew out of and is now amalgamated with Jaffa, formerly Palestine’s major port and the site of numerous violent clashes between early Jewish settlers and the local Palestinian population. It is perhaps because of the fragility of the bubble that Tel Aviv residents so vehemently and consistently assert, as many city residents did publically during the deportation debate, that they do not engage in so-called “politics”.

The focus on humanitarianism instead of politics was thus another aspect of the partial visibility of migrant life and the logic and rules according to which it operated.

The key role of famous or well-known people in promoting a humanitarian response to the deportation order was evident in an especially exaggerated way in the early months of 2010 when renowned journalists Yulval Albashan and Guy Meroz collaborated with pop star Ivri Lider on the writing, production and promotion of a song and music video about the children of migrant workers. The song, called *Habayit Sheli, Habayit Shelcha* (My Country, Your Country), was written specifically for the anti-deportation campaign and featured the voices of several prominent Israelis and a chorus made up of the children who had been slated for deportation.

I attended the shoot for the *Habayit Sheli, Habayit Shelcha* music video which was conducted on an especially hot Saturday afternoon during March, 2010. Producers contacted a group of grassroots, anti-deportation activists and asked them to amass as many of the children as they could. Explaining that Levinsky Park, the play area where many of the children could be found on a daily basis, was not the “look” that they were after, the production team switched to an area just behind the Central Bus Station. A dusty, flat field with no shade and a considerable amount of broken glass and wire strewn over the ground, this area did not seem suitable to the mothers, all of whom chose to wait on the shady side of the street across from the filming, taking care of other, smaller children and, occasionally, bringing juice or cookies to the children being filmed. The crew explained that they were looking for a particular view of the bus station to frame the shot, and this vantage point offered the best possibility.

The final video featured the children playing in the dusty field, jumping on a mini trampoline, and throwing around a ball with the backside of the Bus Station positioned

just behind them (Images E and F). One section, the only one filmed at the playground that the children actually used, provided close-up shots of the children's faces as they came down a slide. Other shots of the neighbourhood, soccer fields, and small outdoor library alternated with visuals from a recording session in which prominent Israeli politicians and artists donned studio-quality headphones and took their turns singing at various microphones. The children also appeared in the studio, arranged in a group, also wearing high quality headphones and singing loudly during the chorus which described a scene of children playing in the park. "A small Chinese boy, and a Turkish girl, a flushed Nigerian, and a pretty Moldovan. Slowly they're joined by a skinny Nepali girl who dreams only of how she can serve in the army".

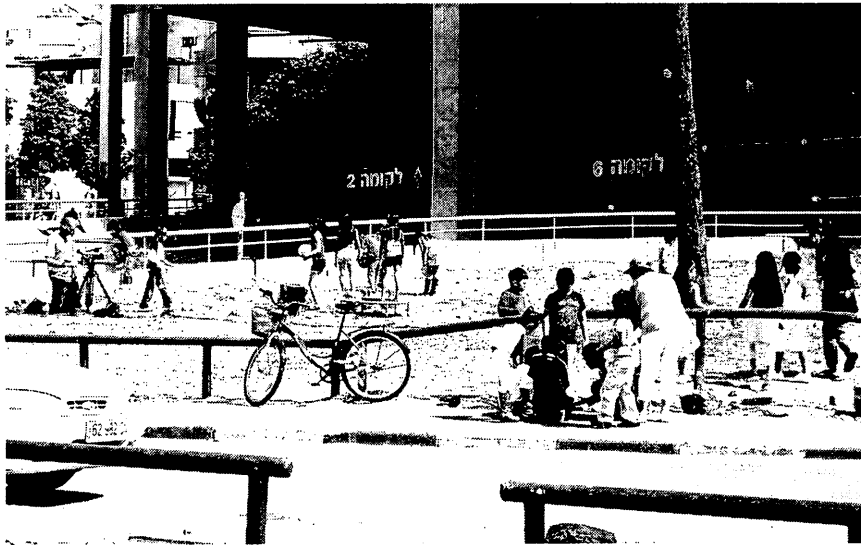


Image E: Filming of *Habayit Sheli, Habayit Shelcha*  
2010 - Tel Aviv, Israel



Image F: Filming of *Habayit Sheli, Habayit Shelcha*  
2010 - Tel Aviv, Israel

While Israeli adults were present everywhere in the video – singing, speaking, playing music and overseeing the sound mixing in the studio, and also reading to the children at the library – there was only a single shot featuring one of the illegalized migrant mothers. It occurred just at the end of the song, when the narrative arc was coming full circle. An eight-year-old boy, the same one who had been portrayed in the first shot of the video taking a book out from the library, lies down on a bed and falls asleep with the same book open across his chest. The viewer sees a hand take the book away from him and put it aside. Just then, the woman, a Filipina whom I knew to be especially active in her community and in the anti-deportation campaign, puts her head into the frame and kisses the boy on the forehead as the scene fades.

The hyper-visibility of humanitarianism in the deportation debate in Tel Aviv was linked to the perception of children as innocent, vulnerable and blank slates upon which Israeli culture could be inscribed. As Malkki has noted, children (and not just refugee children) have figured prominently in the dominant imagination of what a human is when he or she is stripped of all forms of worldly corruption (2010:58). Her observations of children as “naked humanity” (Malkki 2010:60) apply to the representation of children in both the video and the photographs, specifically that they were portrayed as human beings who were purer than and distinct from their parents. They, and their struggle for rights, therefore existed outside the framework of “politics”.

Of course the logic of humanitarianism, embedded in a liberal Western ethos, is defined by more than just its opposition to politics. As a humanitarian cause, the struggle against the deportation of the children was also understood by the producers of the video as encompassing the various components of humanitarianism, including “concern for suffering” and an “ethics of intervention” that is mobilized in “response to emergency” (Ticktin 2011:252) in the name of “moral certainty” (253). The reinforcement of the children’s neediness as well as their ability to rely on a population of people who were capable and willing to help (Israeli citizen adults) was thus central to the framing of *Habayit Sheli, Habayit Shelcha*. Beginning with the set-up of the video in an especially dilapidated and stark area of the Central Bus Station – interestingly, an area where I had never seen children playing before that day – viewers were invited to look at the children’s lives through images of south Tel Aviv as a place of stark poverty. Spoken lyrics that accompanied the visual image explained that the children play just like all

other children, but without “money, power, respect or glory”. As they played on a dusty field with the bus station hovering over them, the scene was set for viewers to feel responsibility for the ways in which the children’s youth and beauty were being ignored or dismissed by a heartless state that would have them deported.

In contrast to the heartless state, the Israeli singers and public figures who had gathered to record the song, as well as other Israelis who were portrayed supervising the children’s play throughout the video and, indeed, the viewers who were being called to action through the song, were charged with taking care of and protecting the children. Lyrics that were both spoken and sung by the Israeli adults referred to their hopes for a better country in which children would not have to be afraid. Those lyrics that were directed at the children promised that “you [the children] will stay with us [Israelis]”. Israeli adults thus acted as a stand-ins for the children’s parents who, while present at both the video and photo shoot, at all the demonstrations against the deportation of the children and, of course, daily as they cared for their children, fell just outside of the frame of the camera every time.

Through the video in particular, the children were thus presented as needy subjects, and the Israeli citizen adults were presented as the key agents of humanitarian concern and care for them. I elaborate on the complex relationship between Israeli citizen adults and illegalized children in the chapter that follows. The video shoot and its final product have been relevant in this section, however, as a way to describe how migrants were represented as simultaneously visible and invisible throughout the deportation debate; specifically, the heightened visibility of humanitarianism and the related

invisibility of politics and the context of migration. The effects of this particular construction of migrant (in)visibility were that short term 'care' was privileged over long term change. As Malkki has noted, humanitarian concern and its related practices can "displace, muffle, and pulverize history" (Malkki 1996:237). I've suggested that it is not just the past, but the present and future as well, that are obscured through the engagement in humanitarian processes.

In this section I've described how political (in)visibility manifested itself in the "public articulations" (Lai 2010:502) of migrants in Tel Aviv as illegalized migrant women and their children, in particular, worked with Israeli citizens in order to promote their political goal of obtaining legal status for Israeli-born children. I've shown some ways in which these public articulations were also partial articulations that highlighted specific aspects of migrants' lives while obscuring others. Processes of highlighting and obscuring worked in tandem, as 'ways of seeing' migrant children were constructed in relation to 'ways of *not* seeing' adults, and 'ways of seeing' humanitarianism were dependent on 'ways of *not* seeing' politics. Migrants' participation in anti-deportation performances therefore describes the cultivation of the seemingly opposed but internally coherent intimate condition of visible invisibility.

## **Conclusions**

For Brighenti, "places of visibility" are sites in which visual representations are produced, and ideas about individuals are solidified (2007:333). As such, they are central to people's ability to 'be seen' and represented in the public realm. In this chapter I've

described some of the “places of visibility” within which illegalized migrant women and their children saw, were seen and made themselves seen in Tel Aviv in 2009-2011. I’ve framed migrants’ interactions in medical institutions, NGOs, popular media and with members of the Israeli public as representative of three overlapping fields of (in)visibility; bureaucratic, physical and political. In each of these fields, it has been clear that visibility and invisibility are active processes, that they are unevenly distributed, and that they are dependent on one another. Where something is seen, there is frequently something else that is obscured or unseen.

Furthermore, the stories and experiences of Lupe, Nora and others have demonstrated that migrants had different and often unpredictable “modes of access” (Brighenti 2007:333) to their own (in)visibility and representation in Tel Aviv. In some cases migrants were able to strategically manage or manipulate the ways in which they were seen, acting as agents in their own (in)visibility. In other cases migrants were not able to do this, having their bodies categorized and labelled according to the norms, ideals and logic of the local Tel Aviv context. In yet other cases, the efforts of both migrants and Israelis to cultivate particular kinds of visibility or invisibility had consequences that were not immediately apparent, or were contrary to their intentions. In all of these cases, the interactions of illegalized migrant women and their children in the various “places of visibility” mentioned here, constituted a politics of intimacy through which migrant women’s choices and strategies shaped and were shaped by Israeli structures and ideologies, specifically the policies, laws, bureaucratic or administrative practices and socio-cultural expectations pervasive in Tel Aviv at that time.



## CHAPTER FIVE: INCLUSIVE EXCLUSION

“Our connection to this [anti-deportation campaign] is personal: It began when my grandmother, who is 95 and a Holocaust survivor, made us promise that we would take care of her “granddaughter” Purita – her Peruvian caretaker’s little girl.”  
(Noa Maiman, Israeli anti-deportation activist, quoted in Weiler-Polak 2009d)

“In the first place, you do not *love* me; you may be fond of me, but that is all...In the second place I am *not* just like one of the family at all! The family eats in the dining room and I eat in the kitchen. Your mama borrows your lace table-cloth for her company and your son entertains his friends in your parlor, your daughter takes her afternoon nap on the living room couch and the puppy sleeps on your satin spread...and whenever your husband gets tired of something you are talkin’ about he says, ‘Oh, for Pete’s sake, forget it...’ So you can see I am not *just* like one of the family.”  
(Mildred, a domestic worker speaking to her employer in  
“Like One of the Family: Conversations from a Domestic’s Life”,  
Childress, 1986:2 original emphasis)

In the previous two chapters I described processes that characterized illegalized migrant women’s relationship to Israeli law enforcement, medical and welfare bureaucracies and popular media. I’ve labelled these processes the politics of intimacy, using the term intimate to denote migrant’s interdependent engagement with the Israeli state and government through the “intimate domains” of “sex, sentiment, childrearing and domestic arrangement” (Stoler 2000:1). Specifically, I’ve shown that women’s decisions and strategies in these domains have been shaped and/or determined by Israeli structures and ideology. Women’s decisions and strategies have also, however, been influential in the ways in which Israeli structures and ideology have developed, and continue to develop over time. I’ve also used the term intimate to label the conditions that emerge from these politics, which are made up of seemingly opposed elements that are, in fact, mutually constitutive. I showed that with respect to how long they stay in the country

(Chapter Three), and how they are visible within both an administrative and cultural realm (Chapter Four), illegalized migrant mothers are enmeshed in a web of complexities that draw them into a close, yet always vulnerable relationship with Israeli society.

In this chapter, I further develop my argument that the politics of intimacy creates intimate conditions, in this case, the condition of inclusive exclusion. Through a discussion of the ways in which illegalized mothers and children engaged with Israeli bureaucratic, administrative and cultural institutions on matters of the construction of family and belonging – that is, who is related to whom, in what ways and to what end – I explore how, just as in the cases of permanent temporariness and visible invisibility, inclusive exclusion is a seemingly contradictory yet internally coherent condition of migrant life. I also use this chapter to elaborate upon an aspect of the politics of intimacy that is referenced but not fully developed in the previous chapters – namely, that these politics have the effect of positioning migrants in a particular way vis-à-vis other residents of Tel Aviv and Israel.

To begin an exploration of inclusive exclusion, I ask how migrant women organized themselves into households and attempted to obtain legal recognition of who constituted their families, particularly where illegalized children were involved. How did Israeli citizens participate in these politics? Among which migrants and citizens did the construction of family and belonging occur, and under what circumstances? And what were the broader implications of these interactions and the relationships that they fostered, particularly for cultural notions of Israeli nationalism?

The quotes that open this chapter refer to the oft-cited expression that domestic workers are “part of the family” or “just like part of the family”. While these expressions are commonly taken for granted as simple metaphors or similes, their use is neither neutral nor passive. Rather, it constitutes an act of “familializing” (Stasiulis and Bakan 2005), a nuanced social practice that does not just describe, but also creates relationships. My ethnographic material, in this chapter, highlights micro-processes that define familializing. It also describes how these processes operate, alongside processes of inclusion and exclusion, both within and beyond domestic work.

The descriptions below of two illegalized migrant mothers, one with a nine-year-old daughter and the other with a newborn son, introduce the mutually reinforcing relationship between inclusion and exclusion and the ways in which familializing helps to explain this relationship. Two key points emerge from these case studies and run through the analysis that follows. First, that while migrants’ experiences of being both included and excluded were rooted in interpersonal interactions carried out in domestic places, usually considered private, it was also interactions in so-called public sites outside of these domestic places - including the workplace, the school and anti-deportation activism - that were implicated in helping to generate and perpetuate inclusive exclusion. Second, processes that occurred in domestic as well as non-domestic places defined and created links between two socio-cultural fields; the extended family and the cultural ideal of a national family held by the majority of Israelis, that is, who belonged to the Israeli nation and what members’ obligations were to one another.

**Familializing matters –  
Grace and Alejandra**Grace's workplace family

Grace was 40 years old when she left her home in Pampanga Province in the Philippines to work as a caregiver in Israel. Her house, among many others, was destroyed in the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo. Even though Grace had studied agricultural development for two years in college and had hoped to obtain a job in that field, by 1996 the rebuilding efforts had taken enough of a toll on her family's finances that she knew that her best choice was to work abroad. When I first met Grace so many years later in 2009, she and her nine-year old daughter Manuela were living together in a tiny apartment just down the street from the Central Bus Station in South Tel Aviv. The two slept together in a single bed amidst the tightly packed but neatly organized clothing, toys, pictures and knick-knacks of all kinds that Grace had accumulated during her 13 years in the city. Both were illegalized, living in the city under constant threat of deportation.

Grace and Manuela had a particularly close bond. They did not always talk very much because both Hebrew and English were a challenge for Grace and because Manuela always responded to her mother's instructions in Tagalog with the Hebrew that she had learned in school and spoke with her friends. But mother and daughter were nevertheless consistently together, a very tight family unit of two. At the many social events and parties that they attended, I could always see both looking over their shoulders to check where the other was and what she was doing. Because it was so hard to imagine Grace

without Manuela, I was especially interested in asking what it was like for Grace before her daughter was born and when she was pregnant.

We were sitting in her apartment one evening in November when Grace mentioned briefly that she became pregnant on a vacation to the Philippines, telling me that Manuela's father (Manuel) had been with Grace in the Philippines and then had returned to Tel Aviv with her in preparation for her giving birth. Even though I had known Grace and Manuela for several months at that point, I had never heard about the father before, and asked what it was like when the three of them returned from the hospital. But as she described the events following the birth, and those she experienced while taking care of Manuela as a baby and toddler, Grace launched immediately and exclusively into a discussion about her employer, the woman who she had been taking care of for four years before Manuela had been born.

You know the son of my employer, he asked me when I would give birth. So he wanted to come here from America. I told him I was okay but he said that he had to come to make sure that nothing would happen to me. He called from America on January 16<sup>th</sup> and we told him that I gave birth already. But he could only come on the 19<sup>th</sup>. We were back from the hospital and he came over to the house. He put his luggage outside and ran inside. He took Manuela and felt so happy.

I then asked Grace to whom she had turned when she was having difficulties or when she needed help, especially once she had given birth to Manuela. Since I knew her network of friends to be such an extensive one, and the various Filipino communities in Tel Aviv to be well-integrated, I asked specifically if friends had shared clothes or baby items with her just after the baby was born. But Grace's response surprised me again, as she briefly acknowledged her other friends before returning to talking about her

employer's son, a man who I came to understand was the one who managed her employment.

Yes [people share], but when I gave birth the employer's son bought me an *agala* [stroller], and every time he came to visit Israel he brought a lot of clothes and shoes. Twice a month he would visit from America...now he is living in [the suburb] Ramat Aviv. Sometimes I take Manuela there because they love Manuela very much.

Grace went on to tell me details of the whereabouts and current jobs of her employer's children and grandchildren. One son of the woman for whom she cared had died in the army at 20-years of age and the other (the one who managed her employment) lived in Los Angeles with his wife and two children. The employer, already over 80 years old when Grace started to work for her and showing early signs of Alzheimer's, had one cousin in the country who visited her about once a month. Grace told me that she had preferred not to take holidays away from work for those first six years because she didn't want to leave her employer alone.

I was so happy with the family I worked for then because [the employer's sons] treated me as their sister. They have no sister, just two brothers, so I was their sister. My employer also accepted me as her daughter. So that is why I love her very much.

Grace's use of kinship terms as familial metaphors (calling herself her employers' sister and daughter) echoed classic employment rhetoric that a domestic worker is "part of the family". Numerous social scientists have commented on the double meaning of these metaphors, particularly when used by employers to describe domestic workers' roles in their homes (Gregson and Lowe 1994, Bakan and Stasiulis 1997, Ozyegin 2001, Romero 2002, Mundlak and Shamir 2008, Ally 2009). This scholarship has shown that what one anthropologist has called "kinning the maid" (Latvala 2009:93) may seem like a

gesture of warmth or a symbol of the worker's integration into the employer's life, even while, in pragmatic terms, it also may function to exploit workers. By drawing an employee closer into familial life, an employer simultaneously makes it possible to impose a sense of obligation on the worker, to use this obligation to demand more work without direct payment to the worker, and/or to remove the worker (in symbolic and practical terms) from legitimate legal protections that apply to workers but not to members of the family.

At the same time, others have shown that such processes are never straightforward, as the act of kinning or "familializing" (Stasiulis and Bakan 2005), may also be a manoeuvre through which *both* employers *and* employees emphasize obligation. Degiuli (2007) and Parreñas (2008) have noted that many domestic workers use family terminology to their own strategic advantage, as a way to garner material or emotional support and, in some cases, as a way to extend or expand workers' visas and legal status.

When I considered Grace's comments closely, I realized that her use of familial metaphors might have had a strategic quality. Grace's close relationships to the woman for whom she cared, the woman's son, and the woman's cousin who occasionally visited the house, were closely linked to Grace's continued ability to work and live in the country legally and eventually to live in her employer's house with her child. The closeness that she developed with her employer-family was also linked to gifts that Grace received, to her specific salary (while there are set minimum wages for caregivers in Israel, workers and employers are able to negotiate salaries that exceed this figure) and, not least of all, to her sense of having a family in Israel who needed her, appreciated her work, and were

capable and willing to help her navigate her life in Israel. That Grace was invested in these relationships, and that she would have described them in kinship terms in order to emphasize their intensity and endurance, thus comes as no surprise.

The way that Grace described the putative kinship connection, however, betrayed the broader complexity of familializing in a workplace context. When Grace discussed her workplace family, she was not quite mirroring the phrase “just like one of the family” (as in presenting a reflection of it, from her own perspective), but rather as re-presenting it to me from her employers’ point of view. I specifically noticed that Grace did not refer to her employers as people whom she considered to be *like her* brothers and sisters, rather she was *like theirs*. This linguistic distinction exposed a social one. When she put the act of familializing in the hands of her employer, Grace was expressing the fundamental hierarchical element of their relationship, reproducing rather than overturning the classic relationship of an employer dominating the employee. Her employers treated her well and familialized her because it was in their power to do so, a point emphasized by the fact that she told me on other occasions that she felt “lucky” to have good employers and to be on the receiving end of their benevolence. Indeed Grace was fortunate to have employers with whom she related well. Many migrants whom I met did not have the same positive experiences in their workplaces.

Thus Grace’s story underscores the ways in which power relations necessarily pervade the act of familializing when it occurs between people with distinct legal statuses, and particularly when one has citizenship and the other does not. At the same time, Grace’s story indicates her employer’s particular incapacity, or unwillingness, to reject



power relations even as it signals her own tactics with respect to acknowledging them. Grace's deportability put her in a situation in which her constant vulnerability with respect to being deported significantly heightened her dependence on her employer's good will, her desire to maintain the relationship at all costs, and, of course, the potentially devastating consequences of the erosion or rapid change of that good will.

I use Grace's case here because it highlights the ways in which familializing is infused with power dynamics and it explains how the politics of intimacy operate in this sphere. Interactions in the domestic home/workplace establish process of *both* inclusion *and* those of exclusion, offering the potential for migrants to express or enact their own will, while still being subject to the domination of their employers and the potential for rejection. Far from being oppositional, inclusion and exclusion were mutually constitutive features of migrants' relationships with Israeli citizens.

As she became closer to the family, for example, Grace also became more reliant on their good will and more entrenched in the situation that had been created through the intimacy of her employment. Her potential vulnerability increased in direct proportion with her potential empowerment, as she moved into her employer's home with her baby and became completely dependent on them. As Ally has noted of the "peculiar exploitations of paid domestic work", "closeness, familiarity, and intimacy coexist with distancing, estrangement, and dehumanization", particularly where employers live in close quarters with their employees and can only use social distancing techniques to make up for extreme physical proximity (2009:98).

An additional aspect of the condition of inclusive exclusion, namely the implications of workplace familializing on a national scale, can be understood from the position that Grace occupied as a caregiver employed through the FWP. The familiarity and inclusivity that Grace was able to achieve with her employers was inseparable from the foundation of exclusion that surrounded her employment. Grace was a foreigner in her workplace and in the country. She was authorized to live and work in Israel only temporarily, and she was racialized and classed as such. While neither Grace nor her employers made this point explicitly, Barbara Swirski, executive director of the Israeli information and research centre *Adva*, has articulated it clearly on a general level. “For a lot of middle class Israeli families, the Filipino caretaker is a godsend...[I]t’s such an intimate situation, that there is something appealing about having a foreigner who is neutral and uninvolved” (Swirski, quoted in Leibelt 2011a:91).

Swirski’s mention of “neutrality” and “uninvolvement” are described here as characteristics which are appealing antidotes to a seemingly intimate situation and, also, characteristics that are associated with foreignness. It is not just that employers might prefer someone not in their family to engage in caregiving, but also someone not from their country. Inclusion and exclusion can therefore be understood as mutually constitutive features of migrant life that are also inversely related. The more there is of one of these features of intimacy, the less there is of the other. In other words, while processes of inclusion (typified in cases of familiarity) may increase one’s vulnerability to exploitation, social distancing or even contempt, processes of exclusion (typified in the

treatment of a foreigner as a deportable alien) may engender acceptance and increased involvement – at least on a temporary basis.

The case of Alejandra, an illegalized Colombian migrant with the potential to alter her legal status as a foreigner, provides another angle on this inverse but mutually constitutive relationship. Her story shows how familializing in a legal, and therefore more permanent form, was not as simple or ‘appealing’ as familializing in the setting of a temporary workplace. As she tried to authenticate (in social and legal terms) the relationship between her Israeli boyfriend and the baby they had together, she discovered some ways in which familializing can breed an inclusive form of exclusion.

#### Alejandra’s legal family

I was in the waiting room at the legal aid office with Alejandra and her son Diego. The baby, just four months old and fussy about the noise and the blasting air conditioner, seemed eager to get out of the building. But Alejandra was determined to wait as long as it would take. She wanted to take advantage of this appointment for free legal services and insisted that Diego would have to endure. It had been difficult to get the appointment and was especially necessary now that Alejandra’s lawyer, an Israeli who had been recommended to her by a friend, was becoming impatient and was demanding that Alejandra pay the high fees that she had been accumulating with him over the past few months. Alejandra was broke, and still needed legal council. It had been several months now that she had been trying to get her ex-boyfriend, an Israeli citizen, to claim paternity over their baby.

Alejandra was a migrant from Colombia who had gone to Tel Aviv to work as a caregiver in 2008, but had given up her visa when she left that job to work as a cleaner in an elementary school. She preferred cleaning, she told me, because it was independent. She could live in her own place and not have someone watching her all the time. Alejandra and Felipe were in a relationship when I first met her in the spring of 2010, ten months before our appointment at the legal aid office. She had been living with him and his parents, Jews from Argentina who had made *aliyah* to Israel eight years earlier, when Alejandra found out that she was two months pregnant. When Alejandra told Felipe about the pregnancy, he responded that he felt he was too young to be a father. His mother made it clear from the beginning that she thought it would be best for everyone if Alejandra had an abortion. Alejandra had been surprised by the pregnancy but she was happy about it. She told me that she was 29 years old and “ready to have my baby”. Besides, she found the idea of abortion morally repugnant, telling me a few times that she couldn’t believe that such a thing was legal in a country where people claim to believe in God.

The first few months of the pregnancy were difficult. Alejandra told me that although she had been nauseous and had to stay in bed many nights, Felipe continued to go out to bars and meet with their friends. When she was five months pregnant, the pressure and disharmony between them became too much to bear. The couple broke up and Alejandra moved out on her own. Alejandra told me that she had only a few friends during that period. Other Colombians, whom she had met in Tel Aviv, were the ones who helped her through the rest of her pregnancy.

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She and Felipe still spoke occasionally at the time of Diego's birth, and she was counting on him to accompany her to the Ministry of the Interior where they could register the baby together and ensure Diego's citizenship. When they went to the Ministry, they learned that the process of registering Diego as an Israeli citizen was more complicated than they had first thought. Felipe would have to make his recognition of the baby official by filling out a series of forms. Additionally, because Alejandra was a foreigner, they were told, Felipe was also required to do a DNA test and to present the results to the Ministry as proof that he was the real father.

It was immediately after this visit to the Ministry, Alejandra told me later, that Felipe became more difficult to reach over the phone. Alejandra lost contact with him. She heard that Felipe had a new girlfriend, another Colombian migrant who had lost her legal status and already had three children of her own living with her in Tel Aviv. Alejandra suspected that it was the girlfriend who was putting pressure on Felipe to abandon the process of registering Diego as a citizen and to cut his ties with both Alejandra and Diego entirely. Demoralized, tired and impoverished by the legal processes that she had had to undergo so far, Alejandra often told me that she didn't even care about getting back together with Felipe. In fact, she knew that she would only become an Israeli citizen if Felipe married her or, alternatively, if Diego could obtain the residency rights that so many people were fighting for just as she was going through this ordeal. She knew, however, that both these possibilities were unlikely. At the end of the day, she told me, she just wanted Diego to be a citizen. As far as she was concerned, his father was Israeli and it was only right for Diego to be an Israeli too.

Alejandra's situation demonstrated the limits of familiarity as inclusion, particularly where the choice to familialize – which is what Felipe had done when they moved in together with his parents – might be turned into a legal obligation, that is were Felipe to accept paternity over their child. While informal, temporary or unofficial familializing was accessible to illegalized migrant women, and particularly such women who worked in caregiving, familializing as a formal, permanent, official process was less accessible.

Reading Grace and Alejandra's stories together highlights the operations of inclusive exclusion for illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv, more specifically, the mutual dependence but inverse relationship of being included and excluded from extended and national families in Israel. While Grace was acceptable as “one of the family” in part because of her non-threatening position as a temporary resident in Tel Aviv, Alejandra was rejected as “one of the family” precisely at the point that she and her son did not seem so excluded or deportable after all, as they then had the possibility of staying in Israel permanently, with legal status. In the following sections, I elaborate on particular forms of inclusion, exclusion and the politics of intimacy through which they operate, in three fields of interaction; the extended family, the cultural ideal of a national family, and the spaces of overlap between these two fields.

### **Forms of inclusive exclusion: Strategy and selectivity**

#### Strategy begins at conception: Perceptions of pregnancy as a pathway to citizenship

One evening while passing by the Central Bus Station, I stopped at an outdoor kiosk to buy the latest version of *Focal*, a magazine published by Filipino migrants in

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Israel and sold widely in South Tel Aviv. That month I was especially interested in the cover story on “Israel’s First Filipino Soldier”, a young man pictured smiling in his Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) fatigues. The wording of this headline seemed strange to me since I had just met two other soldiers earlier that month who had been born to Filipino parents and who had each been serving in the IDF for two years. The soldiers had told me that some other children of illegalized migrant workers had already completed their entire service. When I picked up the magazine and saw the caption, however, I saw that the story was about how this soldier had grown up being “of two cultures”. Unlike the other young men I had met, he had one parent who was Israeli and another who was Filipino.

I put the magazine down to pay, and the Israeli man behind the counter looked at me strangely. Without my saying a word, he switched out of the English he had been using with the Indian customer next to me and asked me in Hebrew. “Why are you buying that magazine? It’s for the Filipino community. Did you know that?” When I just shrugged my shoulders and put my seven shekels on the counter, he followed up by saying, “The only Israelis who buy that magazine are old men who want to get dates with Filipina women.” I told the man that I wasn’t Israeli, and that I bought the magazine because I was interested in the issue of illegalized children in Tel Aviv.

At this he got excited and leaned in towards me over the counter. “You know that these women are having babies all over the place. They are doing it with anyone who has a drop of citizenship.” I asked him, perhaps in a defensive tone since I had heard his perspective from other men as well, how he was able to know anything about what Filipina women were doing and why they were doing it. He took a breath, stood up

straight, and told me that he had just broken up with a Filipina woman who had been his girlfriend for four years. He had spent a lot of time with her and her friends both in Israel and in the Philippines. "Listen," he continued, leaning in again and lowering his voice,

I would never say this publicly because more than anything it would ruin my business, but these women are having babies just so that they can have citizenship. I've been to the Philippines ten times and there's nothing there. No chance to work. So of course they want to stay here, and the babies are their chance.

Looking at me straight in the eye, the man put both hands down on the counter and said, "*Hem ovdim aleynu.*" The common Hebrew phrase translates directly to "They're working on us" but means something closer to the English "They're 'playing' or manipulating us". "They know that because we are Jews and we've suffered so much as outsiders as well...that we will feel sorry for them and we will let them stay."

This encounter neatly summarized one aspect of the rhetoric generated by Israeli citizens who believe that the children of migrant workers and their mothers should be deported. Migrant women's pregnancies were seen by this population as being premeditated and strategic, engineered by the women in order to link them and their children either to an Israeli man, who might confer citizenship on the child directly, or alternatively, to an Israeli public whose sympathy and good will would translate into granting residency rights to illegalized children as a group.

The kiosk owner and others with his views did not use the language of familializing or of strategy explicitly. However, the suspicion that migrant women were creating ties of inclusivity and obligation both to individual Israelis and/or to all Israelis by suggesting that they were part of Israeli extended families and/or the idea of an Israeli national family, can be understood as a suspicion that migrant women were engaging in



strategic familializing. They were managing their relationships with Israeli citizens and also with Israeli society, both through their use of language and through their engagement in processes that made claims to familial relationships. The suspicion, held by some Israeli citizens and migrants, incorporated the views that women engaged in familializing deliberately and, also, that such acts of generating their own inclusivity on false pretenses were transgressive or even criminal.

Thus the kiosk owner was not alone in asserting that migrant women were using their bodies and their children's bodies as a way to be included and obtain status. Interior Minister, Eli Yishai, articulated similar suspicions in one widely publicized comment that he made in October of 2009, early in the deportation debate. The *Jersualem Post* quoted Yishai as saying that "Illegal" migrant women were using their children as "a talisman to secure their continued stay in the country". The use of the word "talisman", referencing both the objectification of the children at the hands of their mothers and perhaps the godlessness of the act itself, was only one element of the broader demonization of migrant women that Yishai and other pro-deportation politicians promoted over the course of the deportation debate. The more common and overt form of demonizing was that it was not just the political debate over deportation that was problematic for Israelis, but the migrant women themselves, whose behaviour and lack of morality was threatening the country's social fabric. The women's activities (including the sex that they chose to have, when, where, and with whom) were imagined to be part of the their plan to manipulate or fool Israelis into including them in either extended families or the cultural ideal of a national family. Indeed, Yishai did not criticize only the women in this

and other statements, but also the Israelis who supposedly succumbed to their manipulations. He warned the public against becoming too sentimental about illegalized women and their children, asking that Israelis not yield to “naïve bleeding hearts”, and that they acknowledge their capacity to be victimized by migrants’ deviousness.

Yishai’s warnings responded to what he and others perceived as an increase, both in migrants women’s engagement in strategic familializing, and in the ways in which the Israeli public was accepting the notion that children born in Israel should be included in the Israeli nation. His concern was less with migrant women who were conceiving children with Israeli citizens (still a minority among illegalized migrant mothers), than it was with migrant women who were conceiving children with migrant men and hoping that they could lobby successfully to obtain residency status for those children. Pervasive as it was, the deportation debate brought forth an unprecedented moral panic around migrant women’s sexuality and around ideas about motherhood.

A conversation I had in January, 2010 with a Filipina woman who had herself been a labour migrant, married an Israeli, had a child, and become a citizen several years previously, highlights the qualities of this moral panic and how it became particularly relevant during the deportation debate. One evening while handing out flyers for a fundraiser, *Israeli Children’s* “Dance against the deportation” event, a Filipina woman approached me and the two Nepali men who were with me that evening. Both men were illegalized fathers and had spent the evening talking to people in the neighbourhood about the deportation debate and their perspectives on it. The woman overheard the men

speaking to someone else, and came over to the three of us in order to voice her concern over the activism we were representing.

According to this woman, it had become common knowledge among migrants living in South Tel Aviv that people like us were fighting against the deportation of Israeli-born children of migrant workers. In participating in this activism she told us, we were tacitly advertising that pregnancy and birth were a migrant woman's "ticket to citizenship". The woman assured us that she had personally encountered (through her work at a store in the Central Bus Station) many young Filipina and "other" women who were getting pregnant "all the time" just so that they could get status in Israel. They were "mixing races" by pairing up with Turkish and Nepali men who did not care about, or even formally recognize the children who came out of these unions. In addition they were having children out of wedlock and without the necessary resources to raise them properly.

The worst part of this situation, the woman emphasized to the men in particular, was that instead of caring for the children whom they had left back home, these young, now illegalized migrants were rather providing for the costly pregnancies, births and childcare expenses that they fostered in Israel. When they returned to work after the births, these women were just filling up the many "cheap and unclean" daycare services that had popped up along the street. One of the Nepali men, who also happened to own and operate a daycare service, became especially agitated at the suggestion that children weren't being cared for properly in such facilities. He asked the woman where *her* child had been cared for and how she could be so sure that the services had changed so much

over time. The woman only scoffed and explained to us that things were entirely different than they had been when she had arrived in Tel Aviv 17 years earlier. The problem was getting worse all the time since the “new Filipinas” were less responsible than she had been, again, because they knew that some Israelis had taken on their cause. She then excused herself saying that she was in a rush to get home. Just as she was walking away she told us that she sincerely wished us luck, despite the fact that we seemed very ignorant of what was really going on around us.

The three perspectives that are described here have overlapping emphases on nationalism, the scarcity of resources and individual morality, all themes that will be taken up in the following chapter. It is significant for this chapter, that all of these concerns were inscribed on the bodies and decision-making powers of illegalized women. Further, the perspectives hinged on the supposition that such women were choosing sexual partners and/or giving birth to children for the express purpose of obtaining Israeli citizenship. Whether or not this particularly exaggerated form of strategic familializing was informing women’s choices never became clear to me over the course of the time I spent in Tel Aviv. What was clear throughout my research, however, was how complicated, bureaucratically cumbersome, and challenging it was for illegalized women to be pregnant, give birth and raise children under conditions of illegality. Indeed, they encountered various forms of exclusion (some of which were described in the previous chapters) that directly impinged on any hopes that they had of becoming included in Israeli families, either extended or national. The stories of Alejandra and women who had

similar experiences to hers are instructive in highlighting the details of these processes of exclusion.

Structural estrangement: Securing paternity for illegalized children

Alejandra was not alone in facing the predicament of how to get an Israeli man to legally admit paternity over a child she had conceived with him. A handful of the women whose children were under the threat of deportation in 2009-2011 had become pregnant with Israeli men and had given birth to their children up to ten years earlier. The children were without status precisely because these men did not acknowledge or formally recognize the children as their own. While Jewish tradition and law favour the maternal line in determining the religion of a child, Israeli law considers anyone with Jewish parentage (maternal or paternal) to be eligible for citizenship. Israeli men could therefore confer citizenship onto illegalized children if they followed a set of bureaucratic procedures. This bureaucracy, including the social order that underwrote it and the power dynamics fostered within it, had clearly failed the mothers who were engaged in the anti-deportation debate. Like Alejandra, they had been unable to secure paternity and citizenship for their children despite the fact that the children were born in Israel and had Israeli citizens as fathers.

In my conversations with Alejandra and her lawyer, and with activists and advocates who had helped other women through this process, I discovered that in the absence of an Israeli father who was willing to spend a significant amount of money, time and energy engaging in the bureaucratic complexities required to admit paternity

(including, but not limited to, submitting to a DNA test), illegalized migrant women were called upon to fend for themselves in a system that disadvantaged them in a number of ways. Indeed, this system often had the effect of further estranging them from the men with whom they conceived their children, and also from members of their own communities.

An initial barrier to accessing paternity documents for their children was that women felt reluctant to engage with authorities (including lawyers, immigration consultants or government bureaucrats) on any topic related to their sexuality. The sense of shame or discomfort that they felt over the fact of having had a child outside of a marriage or a stable relationship was compounded by the personal exposure involved in having to tell strangers about this experience. While women explained to me that it had been “hard” or “uncomfortable” to approach Israeli lawyers in particular about having illegalized children with Israeli partners, they did not clearly articulate the source of this discomfort. As I listened to discourses of illegalized migrant women’s sexuality, I was able to assume that the intertwined processes of sexualization and objectification of these women in Israeli society very likely contributed to an intimidating bureaucratic environment for them, especially when confronting the issue of unplanned pregnancy. Although there have been no focused studies of the sexualization of migrant women in Israel, the documentation (academic and advocacy-based) of abuse and sexual exploitation of migrant women on the job (see Ben-Israel 2007, Ayalon 2009, Friedman 2010), indicates that migrant women in Israel are positioned as objects, sexual and otherwise, for the use of their employers.

A subtler but more common form of sexualizing and objectifying migrant women took place outside the workplace. It was generated, in part, through the discourses explored in the previous section. References to women “doing it with anyone”, as the kiosk owner said, as well as less explicit references to women’s loose morals or deviousness, all contributed to a general idea of illegalized women as promiscuous and/or untrustworthy. This suspicion was not only rhetorical but also found its way into policy where it had pragmatic effects on women’s desire and capacity to engage with the legal system. I learned through speaking to Alejandra’s lawyer, Shai, for example, that even in situations where an Israeli father recognized a child and filled out all the appropriate forms, if the mother was “foreign” (non-Jewish migrant) the child and father were still required to submit to a DNA test to officially determine the validity of the familial relationship. If the mother was Israeli, such a test was not required (personal communication, Dec. 28, 2010).

Another barrier to accessing paternity documents for a child with an Israeli father was therefore the financial cost involved in obtaining information regarding tests that were required as well as getting the tests done. Alejandra had been told that the required DNA test would cost her 5,000 NIS (approximately 1,300 CAN). She was making 40 NIS per hour cleaning houses, but was only working 20 hours per week. Alejandra could find more employers and work more hours, she told me, but in the months directly following her pregnancy she preferred to care for Diego herself. Working less outside the home was also a strategy that Alejandra employed to spend less money sending Diego to a baby-

sitting service in her neighbourhood. Considering her expenses, it would take Alejandra months to save up enough money for the test.

Despite another rumour that she had heard that she might be able to get the test done for free, when we called around to various organizations we realized that the 5,000 NIS fee was standard in Tel Aviv. This standard price for the test, we also learned, was somewhat arbitrary. In conversations with medical practitioners and administrators who we consulted on the matter, one doctor commented that she understood the actual cost of collecting samples and analyzing the test to be “about a shekel and a quarter” and, consequently, could not understand why the test would be priced so high, particularly for women who likely could not afford it (personal communication Dec. 30, 2010).<sup>34</sup>

The difficulty in accessing clear information about the DNA test, and the necessity for most women to pay a lawyer to give them this advice, was yet another financial barrier that Alejandra and others were required to overcome. Alejandra and I were in the legal aid office described above precisely because her lawyer Shai’s fees were too high for her (they had accumulated to over 4,000 NIS by the last time I spoke to him). Alejandra had gotten Shai’s name and phone number from a friend of hers who had been in the same predicament a year earlier. Shai told me that he had agreed, based on an understanding of illegalized migrant women’s financial limitations, to arrange payment for his services in installments. Alejandra was behind on those payments, however, and

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<sup>34</sup> Indeed the cost of DNA testing and diagnostics for the purpose of determining paternity varies significantly, and is typically more expensive in situations where the test results are required for legal purposes or must be “court-approved” (American Pregnancy Association – Paternity Testing 2011).



needed to seek out free advice at the legal clinic in order to continue the process she had begun with Shai.

The discomfort and costs surrounding women's access to legal help for obtaining paternity documents was additionally compounded by the sense of exclusion that women experienced in trying to understand the legal language and procedures involved in this process. I made contact with Shai initially as a translator for Alejandra, since he spoke only Hebrew and she spoke only Spanish. It became clear as I alternated between speaking to each of them, however, that the language barrier was only one (of many) elements of their challenge in communicating with one another. Although there were several misunderstandings between them, neither Shai nor Alejandra seemed to even be aware of the extent of the others' inability to understand the other. My conversations with Shai usually ended in his yelling at me in frustration over the phone as he repeated the statements "I've already explained this to her" and "Please tell her she has to pay her bill", while my conversations with Alejandra always involved her expressing surprise over the news I relayed to her. Alejandra alternated between apologizing for not fully understanding Shai's instructions, and complaining to me that he was really difficult to get in touch with, very aggressive, and that he always seemed to be saying one thing and then changing his mind.

Considering the multiple and multi-faceted barriers to securing legal paternity documents for illegalized children, it was not surprising that some of the women who were active in the anti-deportation campaign of 2009 were the same women who had

conceived children with Israeli men (some ten years earlier).<sup>35</sup> These women had either abstained from seeking out paternity documents from the beginning or, else, had abandoned the process once they realized how many obstacles stood in the way of their achieving success.

Alejandra's case does not prove or disprove the common suspicion that illegalized women were engaging in a particular form of strategic familializing by conceiving children with Israeli men. What her case does show, however, is how difficult and complex this process would be for women if they were to employ such a strategy. Policies, fees, and socio-cultural patterns associated with the administration of citizenship, medical bureaucracies and legal counsel, created circumstances through which women were reminded of their foreignness, disenfranchisement and inherent exclusion from Israeli society, precisely at the point at which they were closest to obtaining citizenship for their children and amnesty from deportation for themselves. Possibilities of strategic familializing, and of the very real prospect of legal inclusion that such a thing would engender, were therefore closely associated with processes of exclusion.

#### Selective familializing

A discussion of selectivity in familializing highlights the ways in which inclusion and exclusion were mutually reinforcing features of the same intimate condition.

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<sup>35</sup> No clear statistics exist on how many of the 1,200 children slated for deportation in 2009 had biological fathers who were Israeli citizens. Because of women's reluctance to discuss the matter openly, I was not able to collect reliable information on how many had pursued legal advice and action the way that Alejandra had.

Expanding on the previous chapter in which I outlined the visibility of illegalized children and the invisibility of illegalized adults, my ethnographic material also demonstrates the ways in which illegalized children were privileged over illegalized adults as suitable and deserving members of Israeli society, particularly within the field of interaction that I've called the cultural ideal of an Israeli national family. It shows how illegalized migrant mothers, as well as some Israeli citizens, made efforts to integrate illegalized children into social, cultural and religious institutions that were associated with the nation, and with the people who were imagined to be members of that nation. The inclusion of illegalized children in these institutions, and into the cultural ideal of an Israeli national family, however, was a process that simultaneously excluded illegalized adults from this social and cultural field.

Grace tried hard to coordinate her work schedule with her duties as a mother. She did not find this easy, however, especially when Manuela got older and began making her own demands on Grace's time. When I met Grace in the fall of 2009, she had recently gone from working full days to working only in the mornings because Manuela had told her that she preferred to come home to her mother instead of going to a baby-sitter. For Grace, the decision to cut back on her work made sense financially as well as emotionally. She was no longer sending as much money to her four children and ex-husband in the Philippines. Additionally, if she managed to get home to be with Manuela after school she could save at least part of the 200 USD (charged and paid for in US currency) per month that she had been paying out to the Filipina woman who ran the baby-sitting service. As for school holidays, Grace explained to me, she could take

Manuela to cleaning jobs and let her play on her own or with the employer's children while Grace worked. Grace speculated that Manuela actually liked this arrangement as she enjoyed the extra attention she got in her various families.

All of my employers know Manuela. When she is with me they give her books. She loves to read... Sometimes if she comes with me and there is a book that she likes, the employer will give it to Manuela. Because she loves to hear that Manuela is reading. Three years ago the husband [employer] gave Manuela a book. He was always saying wow, Manuela is amazing, she is only five years old and already she can read that book. So they love Manuela very much. You know, even if she doesn't have a father, she has a father with my employer because they love her very much.

Grace's comments on Manuela's connection to her employers demonstrated the selective familializing of children in this context. Her expression of Manuela's entitlement to an Israeli family was distinct from how she expressed her own (more tenuous and less deserved) sense of entitlement. While Grace described how her employers considered her "like a sister" or "like a daughter", she described Manuela's engagement as more immediate and self-directed. Manuela "had a father" with Grace's employer. Further, Manuela was genuinely loved by her so-called Israeli parents. Her personal qualities and talents, not the least of which was her interest in books and her intellectual abilities, was key to securing and maintaining this love.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I had many opportunities to listen to Grace and other women describe their children's interpersonal relationships with Israeli individuals as well as their relationship to society as a whole. Proudful accounts of children's achievements, interests and characteristics were often linked to the ways in which these qualities made children successful in Israeli public institutions such as school and *Tzofim*

(Israeli Scouts).<sup>36</sup> Equally, complaints over children's aggression, *chutzpa* (nerve), or lack of obedience, were explained to me as features of the children's "being Israeli". Whether perceived as positive or negative, illegalized children were judged by their parents and by others as having absorbed Israeli cultural norms and as having become part of the Israeli nation.

But these descriptions were not just discursive. Comments on children's relationship to so-called Israeli mothers and fathers both reflected and also perpetuated a form of selective familializing through which illegalized children were positioned in material and legal ways as more immediately connected to, and deserving of membership in, Israeli extended families and in the Israeli nation. Just as acts of familializing serve to create (and not only to describe) relationships between domestic workers and employers in the various ethnographic contexts referenced above, so too did these acts solidify the relationships between children of domestic workers and employers in Tel Aviv, in this case, in ways that garnered them the kinds of gifts, praise and recognition that were part of processes of inclusion and that were not afforded to their parents.

Strategy is again relevant to this discussion, as illegalized migrant women often engaged in selective familializing of their children to their employers in ways that referenced children's personal qualities, talents and deservingness of citizenship. While it

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<sup>36</sup> The Federation of Israeli Boy and Girl Scouts is a non-partisan youth movement that has operated as a framework for leadership and educational activities for Israeli youth (ages ten to eighteen) since 1919. An explicitly multi-ethnic and multi-religious organization that is officially open to citizens and non-citizens alike, the scouts or *Tzofim* as they are called, is extremely popular among Israeli youth of all backgrounds. Illegalized children participated actively in the various "tribes" that corresponded with their neighbourhoods.

was not clear if migrant women were getting pregnant in strategic ways, it was clear that they tried various ways to assimilate the children they already had into Israeli life and culture, and to do so in a way that had implications for their rights to Israeli citizenship.

Alejandra often told me that she did not expect legal status for herself, but wanted Diego to receive that which he was entitled to as the child of an Israeli man. Her efforts both to strategically and to selectively familialize Diego were manifested in a number of ways. When Diego was close to six months old, for example, I heard from a mutual friend that Alejandra had organized a ritual circumcision for the baby in her home. Alba, a Colombian woman who had known Alejandra and Felipe from the time they became a couple, told me that Alejandra wanted to circumcise Diego so that he would “be ready” if and when his father decided to recognize him. Alejandra was doing “whatever was possible” to prepare Diego for being an Israeli citizen as well as Felipe’s son. As Alba told me, Alejandra wanted her baby to “fit into” and be included in Israeli society in as many ways as he could.

An Ecuadorian woman whom I knew employed another tactic to “help her son be more Jewish”, as she described it to me. Expectantly awaiting recognition from the (Israeli citizen) father of her two children, the woman had her son enrolled in an orthodox Jewish school for boys. While the mother had no intention of converting from Catholicism to Judaism or of learning about Judaism, she nevertheless sent her son to classes in Jewish law and custom. He walked to school each day in the *kippa* (religious head covering) that was part of his school uniform, and brought back daily homework in Talmud and Torah. In this case, the woman’s efforts were not focused on making the boy

more like his father (who was not an observant Jew and did not have an orthodox education), but rather on making the boy more like other Jews and, by extension, other Israelis.

Familializing actions such as these can easily be read as strategic. They signalled women's commitment to shaping their children's bodies and minds into ones that fit into cultural notions of who was a member of the Israeli nation. These cultural notions did not just include being Jewish in a physical sense, but, as both Alejandra and the Ecuadorian woman knew, being Jewish and Israeli in a religious sense, by learning about Jewish history and religion or observing the rites and rituals associated with Judaism.

While entered into strategically, however, these actions were not necessarily linked directly to women's success in obtaining the forms of inclusion that they wanted. Migrant women's inability to find accurate information regarding Jewish rituals, or Israeli society, combined with the tendency among South American migrants in particular to spread rumours and to share information that was incorrect (see Paz 2009 for an analysis of *chisme* or rumour in this community), created significant barriers to the successful execution of strategic familializing as a way to become included in Israeli extended or national families. Far from demonstrating illegalized women's power in this scenario, as anti-migrant sentiment might suggest, these examples express some of the ways in which illegalized women's strategies were often founded on, or mediated by, processes of exclusion, in this case, from properly developing an understanding of social, cultural, legal and religious norms in Israeli society.

This particular form of exclusion was nowhere more overt than in the potential danger associated with Israeli men who legally recognized the children whom they conceived with migrant women, while rejecting the women themselves. An activist with *Israeli Children* explained to me that women who secured legal status for their child while they themselves remained without legal status were unknowingly engaged in a kind of a gamble. What many women didn't think of or fully understand, she told me, was that if the Israeli father recognized the child but did not marry the mother, the child would be a citizen but the mother would still not be a citizen. Such a scenario could potentially culminate in the mother being deported without her child, and consequently having no way to stay in the child's life (personal communication, Feb. 16, 2010).

Activists and advocates were aware of such a possibility and attempted to share the information with women who approached them for advice on securing paternity for their children. While the scenario was unlikely, since it depended on the very rare circumstance of Israeli fathers claiming full custody over their children, the possibility of mother and child having different legal status was not only likely, but was posited as the desired outcome of the anti-deportation campaign. If the children received status as a result of the campaign, it would only be a form of residency (and not citizenship) status that could be changed to full citizenship status when the child reached 21 years of age. Mothers of those children, on the other hand, would *not* be issued either residency or citizenship status. Instead they would be issued documents that would protect them from deportation. They would have to renew these documents annually until their child was issued citizenship and could confer this status onto the mother. Illegalized mothers would



therefore carry two different kinds of identification cards on them at all times, one for themselves and another for their children. That mother and child would have different status perfectly represents the process of selective familializing and the implication for selective inclusion that this process engenders.

Ideological factors in inclusive exclusion: Constructions of a national family

The above ethnographic examples highlight decisions that illegalized women made, and strategies that they employed to familialize their children both to particular extended families in Israel and, to their conceptions of what constituted an Israeli national family. Grace, Alejandra, and others made efforts to show their children's emotional, physical, spiritual and religious connections to individual Israeli citizens as well as to Judaism, Israeliness and what they perceived to be characteristics and qualities associated with being included in the Israeli nation.

But it was not just migrant mothers who engaged in the selective familializing of illegalized children. Just as employers in the examples cited above familialize the domestic workers who work in their homes, Israeli citizens' acts of paternalism and maternalism (both within the context of domestic employment and also outside the home, in public institutions such as the school) had the effect of suggesting, and thereby creating, familial connections between them and the illegalized children with whom they had frequent contact. At the same time, these forms of familializing were influenced by Israeli citizens' expressions of what it meant to be included in, or belong to the Israeli nation, including what kinds of characteristics they had as Israelis that made them

responsible for the children. Processes of selective familializing, as they were perpetuated by Israeli citizens, therefore provides a picture of cultural ideals related to what constitutes an imagined Israeli national family.

As is evident from the previous chapter's analysis of "visible children and invisible adults", selective familializing and associated processes of selectively excluding some migrants from "politics" became an important part of the anti-deportation campaign. The focus on children over adults as suitable citizens was both a conscious strategy of Israeli and migrant grassroots activists, whose interest was to gain mainstream support by minimizing the supposed risks of granting rights to non-citizens, and an outcome of the mainstream support that activists were successful in attracting. There were important differences in migrants' experiences of, and enfranchisement, in grassroots activist activities (with *Israeli Children* for example), as opposed to what I call 'mainstream' campaigns which were sometimes facilitated by grassroots activists but were nevertheless substantively distinct activities, such as the music video described in the previous chapter. In both these realms, however, the selective familializing of illegalized children on the part of Israeli citizens contained three overlapping processes. First, it incorporated migrant adults into familializing practices (as processes of inclusion) only in truncated or controlled ways, thereby displacing and excluding them from the campaign and from cultural ideals of a national family. Second, it reinforced nationalist imagery related to Jewish and Israeli history, culture and religion both real and imagined. Third, it introduced the idea of the nation's responsibility or obligation to the illegalized children.

A return to Grace's story demonstrates the process of selective familializing as it took place in Tel Aviv's public school system.

*Maternalism in the school system*

At age 52 Grace was significantly older than many of the other Filipina mothers. But she had the spirit and energy of a much younger woman, consistently participating in any and all of the community events, committees, religious organizations and celebrations that came up. Of all her community activities, Grace told me that she was particularly proud of being on the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) of Manuela's school. When I expressed surprise that she had any time to spare after working all morning and taking care of Manuela in the evenings, she told me that it was especially important for her to join in the activities which they did at the school because, "like the Israeli parents", she wanted to "know and experience" what her daughter was learning and doing there.

In fact Grace wasn't able to tell me much about Manuela's lessons, but she was quick to mention that Manuela's teachers thought Manuela was very intelligent and obedient. She recounted a few stories of meetings she had attended in which the teachers had assured her that "there was nothing to worry about" because Manuela was progressing normally and with good behaviour. In case she was worried, however, Grace told me that she also had the phone number of Manuela's current teacher and felt that she could either call her or visit the principal of the school whenever she needed to. In addition to these contacts, Grace also told me that she, like all the other migrant parents on the PTA, was paired up with an Israeli parent with whom she sat at every meeting and

whose phone number she also had in case of any emergency. When Grace invited me to a PTA meeting, eager to show me around and sure that I would know several of the other women there, she was told that I was not allowed to attend.

I had learned soon after I had arrived in Tel Aviv that Manuela's school, the now well-known Bialik-Rogozin School, was unique in the country. As has been documented elsewhere (see Kalir 2010), Israel's Compulsory Education Law has long required all children who are older than four years and who have lived in Israel for more than three months to attend a recognized educational institution. Despite the law, in the 1990s when illegalized parents first became aware of the possibility that their children could be enrolled in Israeli schools, there was still significant discrimination against illegalized children. While head teachers at various schools used the discretion they had at their disposal to limit the enrollment of these children (citing a lack of capacity, or the children's insufficient qualifications), Bialik-Rogozin opened its doors to large numbers of migrant workers' children and positioned itself at the forefront of developing protocols specially suited for this population (Kalir 2010:118-122).

Although the commitment of Bialik-Rogozin's head teacher to enrolling illegalized children was not popular at the time, the school (and especially its illegalized students) has since then become one of Tel Aviv's primary symbols of multiculturalism and of the successful integration into Israeli society of people of all backgrounds. This image of Bialik-Rogozin's distinct student body, its teachers, and its supposed commentary on multiculturalism in Tel Aviv was particularly celebrated both within

Israel and beyond in the film *Strangers No More* (Goodman and Simon, 2010), winner of the 2011 Academy Award for best Short Documentary.

Released in the later stages of the deportation debate, *Strangers No More* serves as an obvious example of the processes of selective familializing that became popular both in Israeli mainstream media and in international media representations of migrant life in Tel Aviv. In the film, teachers at the school enacted forms of maternalism that did not just place Israeli citizens in the role of parenting illegalized children, but did so by removing the children's own parents from direct engagement with their children's education.

Grace's experiences as a parent on the PTA exemplified the subtle but effective exclusion that the film both portrays and perpetuates. While her participation in Manuela's education was encouraged in a number of ways, such engagement was also mitigated by administrators and other parents who made themselves available for consultations and evaluations (of Manuela's progress) and/or for translation (both linguistic and cultural) of the processes at the school. Where Grace's participation was encouraged, it was also controlled. These interventions were something that Grace said that she appreciated and believed were "helpful" to Manuela. However, such efforts by Israeli citizens to relate directly to illegalized children, also removed Grace and other illegalized parents from processes of familializing, and consequently from full inclusion. The near-total absence of illegalized migrant parents from *Strangers No More*, and from the narrative it developed about Tel Aviv, was indicative of this pattern.

Beginning with the selection of subjects for the film, the directors chose to focus on children whose parents were either missing or incapable for other reasons of

adequately helping their children. In the film, the viewer is introduced to three students of Bialik Rogozin. Sofia, a nine-year-old girl from South Africa, who went to live with her father in South Tel Aviv after her mother's death, Muhammed, an orphaned teenager from Sudan, who witnessed the murder of his family before escaping to Israel and Johannes, who travelled with his parents and three siblings from Ethiopia to Tel Aviv. The three students were not Jewish and they all lived in Tel Aviv without citizenship or residency status. The documentary traced the integration of these students into the school and into Israeli society, focusing on their learning Hebrew and their relationships to teachers and fellow students. Teachers gave tearful accounts of the children's past experiences and what they called the children's "progress" through the educational system. Teachers simultaneously positioned themselves as caregivers and mother figures who were key factors in the students' ability to move through this system.

Johannes, for example, is portrayed in the film getting fitted for glasses under his teacher's supervision. In a longer sequence, he rides through Tel Aviv on a bicycle gifted to him by the same teacher. Mohammed is shown talking about the "family atmosphere" of Bialik-Rogozin and celebrating his graduation ceremony with the principal of the school. They stand together in one of the classrooms, as the principal talks about how emotional she finds the ceremony and as she tells Mohammed how proud she is of him in particular. The principal tells Mohammed and the audience that he is "like her son". Sofia, who is literally motherless and who is seen in the film talking about the loss she experiences by not having her mother around her, finds solace in the face of this loss,

according to her teachers, in focusing on her studies and on the friends she has been able to make at Bialik-Rogozin.

The broader context in which the children and their parents were illegalized is not explicitly addressed in the film. There is only one scene in which the status (or lack of status) of the children and their parents is mentioned. In the scene, Johannes' teacher visits his family home to consult with his father on "changing" or "replacing" his visa which, until that point, was a temporary residence permit that had to be renewed every few weeks. The teacher proudly announces to Johannes' father and siblings (the mother appears only briefly to serve drinks to the teachers) that she and the principal have arranged for the family to see a lawyer for free. The viewer is told later in the film, just before the closing credits of the film, that Johannes' parents are "in the process" of changing their visa.

The film, as well as Grace's experiences with the PTA, highlight the ways in which teachers in Israeli schools acted either as stand-ins for the parents of illegalized children or as mediators between the parents and their children. The teachers' acts of familializing, including using familial metaphors to refer to students, giving gifts, and/or taking charge of students' education, promoted the inclusion of these children in the fictive family that was created through these relationships while simultaneously promoting or, at least, normalizing the exclusion of their parents from the same relationships.

*Incorporating illegalized children into the national family:  
Narratives of Jewish oppression and obligation in the anti-deportation campaign*

Processes of selective familializing of illegalized children included expressions of what sort of family the children were being included in. The reinforcement of Israeli nationalist tropes, specifically the emphasis on an ideal of an Israeli national family and who belonged to it, was thus one more outcome of the anti-deportation campaign and concurrent interactions between illegalized migrants, their children and Israeli citizens. Statements and actions by politicians, activists, Israeli public figures and migrants helped to construct what it meant to be Jewish and Israeli in that context, not just for migrants but for Israeli citizens as well. Characteristics that were outlined in these public expressions included a concept of morality, an understanding of oppression, and a sense of empathy or obligation to alleviate the suffering of others, particularly children.

The definition of Jewishness and Jewish values was one theme that was highlighted in the early months of the deportation debate. In his attack on Minister of Interior Eli Yishai of the Shas party, Meretz Party Member of Knesset, Haim Oron, stated concisely that the “brutal and shameful decision to deport children...” indicated that Yishai and his fellow members of Shas “have forgotten what it is to be Jewish” (quoted in Weiler-Pollak 2009c).<sup>37</sup> Days later, Defence Minister Ehud Barak contributed his own statement to the debate as he drew connections among religious, political, and

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<sup>37</sup> This comment, and those like it, must also be understood as yet another manifestation of an old and ongoing Israeli debate on the so-called Jewish character of the state, its politics and its politicians. Since the 1990’s the liberal, middle-class and secular Meretz party and the ultra-orthodox, working-class *Mizrahi* Shas party have been perceived as oppositional on this issue and as such have traded accusations on each others’ Jewishness and understanding of the principles of Judaism.



humanitarian behaviour as all part of the Israeli sense of self: “It is our Jewish, national, moral and human obligation to keep the children in Israel” (quoted in *Jerusalem Post* 2009).

While neither Oron nor Barak elaborated on the specific characteristics that Jewishness entailed, it is clear from the discussions which followed that they were both referring to the commonly-understood nationalist trope that being Israeli and Jewish has always carried with it an inherent understanding of oppression. An editorial in *Haaretz* published within the same week both these statements were made, put it succinctly: “A country that was founded by the children of refugees and migrants is obligated to show an extra degree of sensitivity – especially when it comes to children” (*Haaretz* editorial, 2009). Rhetoric on Jewish values and Jewish obligation were therefore not only framed in religious terms, but in terms of a Jewish history of expulsion, exile and return.

Migrants also contributed to this idea of the Jewish Israeli national family as an especially sensitive or empathic one. Describing to me why he attended an *Israeli Children* demonstration in Jerusalem, a migrant worker from the Congo told me that Jews were “compassionate people” whose own experiences of discrimination necessarily made them sympathetic to the plight of others suffering similar forms of discrimination (personal communication, Nov. 18, 2009). African migrant community leader and devoted Christian, Edwin Brownie, made similar assertions in his speech at *Ve-eedat Ha'ashookim* (The Conference of the Exploited). The so-called conference, a rally and demonstration against neo-liberal social policy organized annually by the socialist-Zionist youth movement, *HaShomer HaTza'ir* (the Youth Guard), took place on December 5,

2009, and was dedicated that year to the anti-deportation struggle. Brownie, who was asked to speak at the rally on behalf of the children's cause, made connections among Jewishness, empathy and responsibility in his address to the crowd of approximately six hundred people.

Children who are born here are denied [basic rights] because they say it is a Jewish State, yes. But what is the meaning of the Jewish State?... The meaning of a Jew, has a spiritual meaning. So if Israel will act in such a horrible way against these children you see before you today, then I will not accept it. Because God has said that we should not, that Israel should not, oppress or molest children who are born in this country. Why? Because Israel was once in a foreign land in Egypt and God with his mighty hand brought them into this country... We are pleading please Bibi, Eli Yishai, you have once traveled to another country before. And now you are born in this country. Please, love the children. Look into the eyes of these innocent children and give them their rights.

Two aspects of Brownie's speech demonstrate processes of selective familializing and the related reinforcement of the cultural ideal of an Israeli national family. First, his definition of the modern State of Israel as a product of the biblical story of Jewish exile from Egypt, promoted Brownie's belief in a coherent Jewish nation with historical roots in, and political rights to, the land of Israel. This expression of Christian Zionism, which was a belief-system shared by many African and Filipino migrants in Israel, reinforced Zionist principles that have characterized Israel's selective and exclusionary immigration policy, specifically the facilitation of Jewish migration and the prevention of non-Jewish migration. Brownie's statement thus underscores Jewish-Israeli conceptions that the State of Israel is a site in which members of a Jewish nation who are related to one another by way of their Jewish heritage, oppression in biblical times, and right to the land, can and should come together to live as a national family in the State of Israel.

Second, Brownie's decision to directly address Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu and Minister of Internal Affairs Eli Yishai and, specifically, to personalize the plea for the children's rights also perpetuated the view that Jewish Israelis were particularly empathetic to children and their needs. Brownie asked the politicians to "love" the children and to fulfill God's mandate that children born in Israel be kept safe from oppression and, in this case, deportation. The construction of Jewish Israelis as obligated to the children, and the parallel drawn between them and the children (both had "travelled in another country"), contributed to the selective familializing of children in this context.

References to the biblical story of Jewish exile from Egypt, such as the one made by Brownie, abounded in the anti-deportation debate, and highlighted the children's belonging to the nation. A popular sign at demonstrations read "Let my children stay", a play on the quotation attributed to Moses ("Let my people go") when demanding that the Egyptian Pharaoh release the Jews from slavery. As examples from the music video, Bialik-Rogozin, and the documentary *Strangers No More* demonstrate, the use of "my children" was not just rhetorical, but an act of familializing, indicative of Israelis' sense of obligation to, and responsibility over, illegalized children.

The quotation that begins this chapter is similarly part of Israeli citizens' dual act of familializing illegalized children on the one hand, and of reinforcing nationalist tropes regarding who belongs in an Israeli national family on the other. The quotation, published in the newspaper following a demonstration against the deportation that was held outside the Minister of the Interior in Jerusalem, made the link between Jews' and migrants'

histories of oppression, in this case with reference to a period in Jewish history that is arguably the most politicized and emotionally charged in Israel, the *Shoah* (Holocaust). In the quotation, an anti-deportation activist describes how she promised her grandmother, who was a Holocaust survivor, to prevent the deportation of the illegalized child of her grandmother's migrant caregiver. Calling the child her grandmother's "granddaughter", the activist went on to elaborate on how she would prevent the deportation and why.

As the August deportation deadline drew near we prepared about 75 hiding places for children [slated for deportation]...I felt personally responsible. My grandmother was saved from the Holocaust by a Polish woman who hid her for two and half years. I'm not making a comparison here, but there's this ongoing womanly grace happening here, and perhaps my grandmother is also trying, in her way, to pay the world back in kindness (Noa Maiman, quoted in Wieler-Pollak, 2009d).

In Israel, the *Shoah* is referred to commonly as an historic event that is shared by all members of the Israeli nation, and is thus continuously relevant to political debates concerning the State of Israel in the present.<sup>38</sup> Despite the fact that the Holocaust was experienced in vastly different ways by Jews who lived in different parts of the world, the European or *Ashkenazi* Jewish experience of the *Shoah*, by far the most intensive, horrific and notorious program of imprisonment and systemic murder, is the dominant historical

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<sup>38</sup> The suggestion that the Holocaust and Holocaust commemorations are used as tools in current constructions of Israeli nationalism and public policy has elicited controversy among Jewish communities in North America (particularly surrounding the publication of Norman Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* in 2000). In Israel, however, this suggestion is more commonly accepted and more frequently discussed in both popular and academic culture. For example, Israeli scholarship has documented the political significance of Holocaust commemoration in the construction of the State of Israel and in the early years of statehood (see Weitz 1995), as well as of the ways in which "Israel's collective memory of death and trauma" have more recently been "processed, coded, and put to use in Israel's public space" (Zertal 2005:1) where commemoration has "serve[s] the interests" of the commemorators" (Baumel 1995:146).

narrative that is invoked in public discussions of, or references to, the *Shoah*. Maiman's statement about the preparation of "hiding places" refers to an action proposed in the early months of the anti-deportation debate by activists who had come together under the banner of *Israeli Children*. The plan was to protect illegalized children and their mothers from deportation by allowing them to stay in the homes of Israeli citizens if and when a deportation raid might occur. Deportation police, the logic went, would be less likely to knock on the door of an Israeli citizen (as opposed to an illegalized migrant) in the middle of the night. They would also be less likely to carry out a detention if they were confronted by Israeli citizens who were aware of their rights and those of the migrants they were "hiding".

Even as she explicitly says that she is not making a comparison, Maiman is invoking the imagery of her grandmother's experience of living in the home of a Polish woman where she was literally concealed from the view of Nazi forces, in order to describe her own and her grandmother's sense of responsibility to the children slated for deportation. Maiman's comments were echoed by Holocaust survivors themselves who spoke out against the deportation both individually and as members of social organizations. A particularly well-reported statement was issued by Zeev Factor, the head of the Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors.

You have a moral obligation, especially in light of what happened to the Jewish people. These are children who only know this country and speak our language, and a child must not be deported from the land in which he was born solely due to his origins – this is a lesson engraved in our flesh. (Branovsky 2009)

Here, the evocative imagery of something being "engraved in flesh" can be understood as both a literal and figurative reference, alluding on one hand to the

concentration camp tattoos and physical violence done to Jews throughout the Holocaust and, on the other hand, to the lingering psychological effects of the break-up of families, massive loss of life, and refugee experience that followed. In a statement addressed to Prime Minister Netanyahu, a group of representatives from a collective of Holocaust survivor organizations further emphasized the ways in which their own histories were relevant to the deportation debate and to their visceral sense of obligation to save children from deportation. “We the Holocaust survivors have special difficulty ignoring the choked feeling and the shame” (Branovsky 2009) of not taking a moral and political position on granting citizenship rights to the Israeli-born children of migrant workers. The support that Holocaust survivors offered to the anti-deportation campaign, particularly when this support was phrased in emotional language, lent the campaign a significant measure of credibility. In cultural imaginings of the Israeli national family, Holocaust survivors are among the family’s elders, highly respected for the sacrifices they were forced to make for the good of subsequent generations.

So pervasive were references to the Holocaust during the deportation debate that imagery associated with these references were literally inscribed on the walls of Tel Aviv. Two items of graffiti called up the emotions and political weight of the Holocaust while drawing explicit parallels between the fate of Jews leading up to and in the *Shoah*, and that of illegalized children in Tel Aviv in 2009-2011. In one image (Image G), seen on the outside of various buildings throughout the South Tel Aviv neighbourhoods of Florentine and Neve Sheanan, a young boy in a hat and trench coat stands with his hands above his head in a sign of surrender. The boy is framed by text in both Hebrew and English that

states “DON’T DEPORT ME!” The image, recognizable to Jewish Israelis who have all been educated in various ways about the Nazi project of transporting Jews to concentration/death camps out of the cities and towns where they lived, is a stylized copy of the iconic photograph known as “The Warsaw Ghetto Boy”. This photograph, taken in 1943 and later recovered from an official SS report on the German police raid on, and liquidation of, the Warsaw Ghetto, has been reproduced millions of times, reprinted in magazine, newspaper articles and book covers, portrayed in films and in poetry and, perhaps most strikingly, projected onto a screen as part of the opening remarks of the internationally-televised trial of key SS figure, Adolf Eichmann in 1961 (Zelizer 2010:139). The photograph has also inspired a book about young Jewish victims of the Holocaust, simply called “The Boy: A Holocaust Story” (Porat 2010). Its appearance on public buildings powerfully made the link between the deportation of Jewish children at the hands of the Nazis and the potential deportation of illegalized children at the hands of the Israeli government.<sup>39</sup>

Another item of graffiti (Image H), less commonly seen around the city but equally explicit in its connecting of victims of the Holocaust to illegalized children in Tel Aviv, was the stenciled image of Anne Frank with the caption in Hebrew “And here,

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<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the word “deportation” could itself have been a reference for many people to the Nazi policy of expelling Jews from their homes. I discovered the potential power of this English word, one I was used to from years of activism with illegalized migrants, while explaining my research to a German friend of mine who was living in Israel at the time. My friend was initially confused when I referred to the “deportation” of the children, telling me that she had only ever heard that word to describe the forced movement of Jews, via transport trains, to concentration/death camps in the European countryside. For her, “deportation” directly conveyed both the purpose and method of Nazi policy to rid cities and towns of their Jewish residents.

would she have survived?” Frank is, of course, the Jewish teenager who authored a set of diaries detailing her experiences hiding from Nazi forces when living with her family and another Jewish family in the attic of her father’s office building in Amsterdam. The publication of Frank’s diaries, their translation into numerous languages and the frequent use of these diaries in children’s education about the Nazi occupation of Europe, have arguably made Anne Frank the most well-known and easily recognizable victim of the Holocaust both in Israel and internationally. Indeed, Frank’s face is so iconic that it was portrayed in the graffiti with no identifying information or context. The meaning of this graffiti was nevertheless clear. Frank has historically been an icon of injustice and innocent victimhood, especially the ways in which children are victimized by the ignorance and criminal activity of adults. Her image thus conveyed the injustice of the illegalized children being deported from Israel and, particularly, the failure of ordinary citizens to save them. The caption called on Israelis to account for their own actions by asking if their state and government were any different from those of Nazi-occupied Holland. If Anne Frank couldn’t survive “there”, where her hiding place was discovered by neighbours and reported to the Nazis, and where she subsequently died of typhus in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, would she survive “here”, in Israel?

Both images and texts portrayed in such graffiti alluded to the Israeli government’s campaign to deport illegalized children. These images of the *Shoah*, in conjunction with discursive references to Jewish suffering and victimhood in biblical times, demonstrated three related ways in which the ideal of an Israeli national family was both reinforced and, also, made to include illegalized children. First, images and



discussion about these experiences of Jewishness related Jewish-Israeli citizens to illegalized migrants by suggesting that these groups shared experiences of subjugation, discrimination and cruelty. Second, these images and talk suggested that Israeli citizens were in a position to prevent or fix the injustice of this cruelty, in this case by saving the illegalized children the way that Jewish children in history were not saved. Third, Jewish Israeli responsibility for the children was reinforced through the suggestion that to fix injustice emerged out of a more general Jewish value system. In other words, Jewish Israelis were proving their own membership in an imagined national family by familializing illegalized children.



Image G: Graffiti the Florentine neighbourhood 2010 - Tel Aviv, Israel



Image H: Graffiti 2010 - Tel Aviv, Israel  
Caption – “And here, would she have survived?”

## Conclusions

In this chapter, I have operationalized the concept of familializing in order to explore how illegalized migrants and Israeli citizens defined who was related to whom, developed notions of both extended and national families, and ultimately determined the contours of inclusion against the backdrop of Tel Aviv’s deportation debate of 2009-2011. Familializing is understood as a way of speaking about what family is, who belongs to it, and what their obligations are to one another. It also functions, as it did in Tel Aviv, as a social practice that does not just describe but also creates relations of inclusive exclusion both within domestic places, and beyond those places, in the law, on the street, in schools and in the political mobilization of both pro and anti-deportation activism.

Grace and Alejandra's stories demonstrate how inclusion and exclusion were produced and reinforced through processes of familializing and how they worked in tandem. Specifically, both women's engagement with Israeli citizens, in Grace's case through living with her employers and being given a position on the PTA at her daughter's school, and in Alejandra's case through conceiving a child with her Jewish-Israeli boyfriend and navigating the legal system in order to obtain citizenship for the child, exemplified ways in which inclusion and exclusion were mutually constitutive, and inversely related, features of a single intimate condition. Although Grace felt, and in many ways *was*, part of her employers' family and of her daughter's schooling, it was her very closeness to, and dependence upon, her employers and to Manuela's teachers that also made her vulnerable to being exploited, infantilized or ignored. Similarly, while Alejandra was within her legal and social rights to claim citizenship and/or cultural inclusion for her son, Diego, it was precisely her proximity to these legal and social rights that exposed her ignorance of how to engage with them meaningfully, and which created financial and social barriers such as high legal and medical fees or communication problems with her lawyer, that ultimately prevented her success.

Thus, discussions of strategic and selective familializing provide an analytical space to consider nuances and unexpected outcomes of inclusive exclusion. Illegalized migrant women's attempts to include their children in mainstream conceptions of an Israeli national family, for example, were sometimes misguided, sometimes exaggerated and demonized by pro-deportation activists, and sometimes responsible for enhancing women's own experiences of exclusion. Israeli citizens' acts of familializing, intended as

a way to support illegalized children and the anti-deportation campaign, were often discriminatory or selective, strengthening nationalist and exclusionary tropes even as they incorporated some illegalized children.

Finally, the exploration of inclusive exclusion adds to the previous chapters in Part II of this dissertation by further describing the ways in which the decisions, strategies and actions of illegalized women, as they constructed households, inhabited domestic places and developed ideas of family existed in an interdependent relationship with Israeli state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic and administrative practices, and socio-cultural expectations. These politics of intimacy have produced the intimate conditions under which illegalized migrant women live.

### Part III

In previous chapters, I have argued that intimacy is a socio-political condition that is constituted by politics at a range of scales. I have described how these politics played out in a wide variety of settings on the street, in private homes, schools, health and legal clinics, city parks, hospitals and in the media (newspapers and television). In Part III of the dissertation, I highlight the outcomes of these politics of intimacy and of the intimate conditions that they have generated. Specifically, I use the stories and themes from Parts I and II of the thesis, together with additional ethnographic materials, in order to analyze the impact that proximate foreignness, permanent temporariness, visible invisibility and inclusive exclusion have had on illegalized migrant women and children within the broader Israeli social, political and cultural milieux.

In Chapter Six, on illegalized migrant women as a *Privileged Underclass* in Tel Aviv and in the concluding chapter on the *Open Endings* of the deportation debate and the issue of migrants' rights in Israel, I use additional examples of the politics of intimacy as they figured into the lives of Estella, Janet, Lupe, Nora, Alejandra, Grace and others during 2009-2011. But I also address a new set of questions in these chapters, as I look at the ways in which the politics of intimacy will shape the future of migrant life in Tel Aviv. What kinds of Tel Aviv residents have illegalized migrant women and their children become? That is, into what existing social orders and conflicts have they inserted themselves, and how will this affect their engagement with Israeli structures and ideologies in the years to come? What aspects of migrant life have emerged as a result of

the deportation debate, and what will their significance be going forward? A deeper exploration of Tel Aviv as a city that has developed in response to a variety of conflicts offers a point of entry into a discussion of what is currently happening there, both with regard to the deportation debate and to the social and political movements that have grown up around issues of migrants' rights.

## CHAPTER SIX: PRIVILEGED UNDERCLASS

“You want to talk about the Occupation?

Look at the occupation here. There’s an occupation in Tel Aviv.”

(*Mizrahi* and South Tel Aviv activist speaking to a group of Israeli anti-deportation activists about the proliferation of migrant and asylum-seeker settlement in the southern neighbourhoods of the city, March 2010)

In Part II of this dissertation, I discussed illegalized migrant women’s relationships with Israeli citizens as constitutive parts of migrant women’s interdependent engagement with Israeli state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic practices and socio-cultural expectations. In the chapters on *Visible Invisibility* and *Inclusive Exclusion* in particular, I illustrated the ways in which illegalized migrant women and their children became – albeit in fraught ways – friends and colleagues of Israeli political activists, as performers in local and national venues of popular culture, as parts of their Israeli employers’ families and as members of an idealized national family. However, as I discovered early in my fieldwork, and in the years that followed, another element of the politics of intimacy was constituted in the interactions between migrants and Israeli citizens who did not, for the most part, engage with them as employers, lovers, advocates, friends or potential compatriots.

In this chapter, I describe these interactions, elaborating on the pro-deportation campaign as well as the context in which it developed, in order to illustrate an outcome intimate conditions that characterized the lives of illegalized migrant women and their children. As a “privileged underclass”, migrant women and their children occupied a complex and unique position among the varied social and class groups that made up Tel

Aviv's urban milieu. On the one hand, illegalized migrant women and their children shared public spaces, conditions of poverty and concerns over local "inner-city" matters – such as safety and a lack of municipal service provisions – with their historically-marginalized neighbours in the southern part of the city. On the other hand, they shared holidays, special events, their work places and the majority of their time with relatively wealthy residents of Tel Aviv's northern neighbourhoods who were their employers, part of their familialized social group, financial patrons and supporters of their political struggles. While migrant women shared their lack of protection in the illegalized employment sector and their vulnerability to deportation with severely disempowered African asylum seekers and illegalized Palestinian workers, they shared the political campaign against their children's deportation, as well as much of their leisure time, with highly educated and politically enfranchised activists, artists, journalists and researchers from both Israel and abroad. I argue that being simultaneously marginalized and enfranchised, that is, living as an underclass of illegalized workers while having relative privilege and access to power, was an outcome of the intimate conditions that defined illegalized migrant women's lives in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011.

In order to discuss illegalized migrant women's unique social and class position in Tel Aviv, I must begin by describing long-standing divisions within the city and among its diverse population. Most prominently, there exist established ethnic and class divisions that map onto the geography of Tel Aviv and separate the city conceptually into a politically and socially dominant 'North', which is largely populated by middle or upper class, *Ashkenazim* (descendants of Jewish communities in eastern Europe), and a



disempowered and neglected 'South' which is largely populated by poor or working class, *Mizrahim* (descendants of Jewish communities in the Middle East and the Caucasus).<sup>40</sup> The presence of migrants gradually became a significant part of the tension that divided residents of Tel Aviv's North and South, especially, as the quote that begins this chapter demonstrates, in the complaints of south Tel Aviv residents that their neighbourhoods were being "taken over" by migrants in order to accommodate the labour needs of a so-called northern, left-wing elite.

Although the labels of North and South are simplified and do not adequately represent the nuances within the city, I nevertheless use them as proper nouns for two reasons. First, the terms were used among residents of South Tel Aviv during my fieldwork and thus most accurately conveyed the strong perceptions of social and class differences. They emerged especially dramatically during the pro-deportation debate. Second, the everyday use of these terms highlighted an issue that called for further investigation. Just as the area of South Tel Aviv has been absent from promotional material about the city, so has the topic of social and class divisions within Tel Aviv been

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<sup>40</sup> The word *Mizrahim* literally means "easterners" and refers to the East as defined during the Middle Ages, what is now considered the Middle East and Asia. Historically, the term has referred to descendants of Jewish communities from modern-day Iraq, Syria, Iran, India, Yemen, Georgia and Uzbekistan. It is also sometimes used colloquially, however, as in the case of South Tel Aviv, to refer to the descendants of Jewish communities from Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya. *Mizrahim* are often referred to as a subset of *Sephardim* (literally, "Spanish Jews") who are descendants of Jewish communities from the Iberian Peninsula that settled in modern-day Greece and Turkey in the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The grouping together of *Mizrahim* and *Sephardim* refers to religious rather than geographic or ethnic similarities, specifically, the propensity of most *Mizrahi* Jews to use a *Sephardi* style of liturgy (see Goldberg 2008 for an exploration of the politicized history of the uses of the terms *Sephardi* and *Mizrahi*).

absent from the academic literature on illegalized migrants in Israel. The issues raised by these terms became highlighted in 2009.

**Beyond the White City:  
A brief social history of South Tel Aviv**

The development of a branded city

To set the stage for an understanding of how migrants were positioned within the city's North and South, I turn first to a description of the urban landscape of Tel Aviv-Yafo.<sup>41</sup> In a rare analysis of Tel Aviv's southern neighbourhoods, architect Sharon Rotbard has called this collection of neighbourhoods the "Black City", juxtaposing Tel Aviv's impoverished, destroyed and neglected parts with the White City, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site that names Tel Aviv's collection of Bauhaus architecture in *Merkaz Ha'ir* (the City Centre) (Rotbard 2005).

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<sup>41</sup> The naming, spelling and pronunciation of city and street names in Israel/Palestine is highly politicized and should not be taken for granted in a description of Tel Aviv's social geography. I refer here to *Tel Aviv-Yafo*, which is the Hebrew and official name for the amalgamated municipality that was created by the Israeli government in 1950 in order to bring together in a single, municipal unit the primarily Jewish Israeli city of Tel Aviv and the primarily Palestinian Israeli city of Jaffa immediately to its south. I use this official name deliberately here, to highlight the political constitution of the city as it existed during my fieldwork. However, in the remainder of this chapter, as elsewhere in the dissertation, I refer to *Tel Aviv* (as opposed to 'Tel Aviv-Yafo') in order to mirror the common understanding of Tel Aviv as a singular entity that is either separate from, or else dominating of, Jaffa. I also use the English language spelling and pronunciation, *Jaffa*, in this chapter to describe anything specific to this particular part of the amalgamated city. It is important to note, however, that some residents of Jaffa now use the Arabic spelling and pronunciation *Yafa* or *Yaffa* in order to emphasize the city's past, present and future importance to Palestinian political sovereignty and cultural life.

While it was only designated a UNESCO site in 2003, the White City has long represented Tel Aviv's links to Europe of the past and present. As the first Zionist city, Tel Aviv ("spring mound" in English) was built to reflect the vision of early Jewish settlers, many of whom were middle-class Ashkenazi Jews who migrated from Eastern Europe to Palestine as part of the *First Aliyah* in the 1880s and 1890s. The city was built to become a centre of secular Jewish life, specifically, an alternative to the conditions of persecution, insularity and degeneration that were seen as plaguing Jewish communities in Europe. "Tel Aviv" was the Hebrew name of Theodor Herzl's 1902 novel, *Altneuland* (Old New Land),<sup>42</sup> a story of Viennese Jews who come across a peaceful and thriving Zionist utopia on the shores of Palestine. The city's main streets still carry the names of well-known Zionist leaders and the Bauhaus architecture represents the contribution of German Jewish architects who fled Nazi persecution and settled in Tel Aviv in the 1930s.

The designation of the city as the manifestation of European political Zionism, however, has given way to the city's current reputation as Israel's centre of commerce and cosmopolitanism. High priced shops, cafes and restaurants, many of which are chains that are also found in European capitals, line the streets of the White City and service the population of educated, upwardly mobile and secular Israelis, as well as Jewish immigrants from Europe and North America, many of whom move to Tel Aviv in order to enjoy the lifestyle for which it is now well known. While gaps between middle and upper class residents of Tel Aviv have increased markedly in the past few years, as

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<sup>42</sup> Herzl was a Hungarian-born Jew who worked as a journalist and writer in various European cities. He authored the influential book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), and is commonly known as the father of modern political Zionism.

evidenced in the large and impassioned social protests of 2010, the reputation of the White City has prevailed and been reinforced in tourist brochures and promotional material that is designed to encourage foreign investment in the city, and, most significantly of late, its growing real estate market.

Of course, the official branding of White City, both past and present, tells only a limited part of the historic branding of Tel Aviv and its current demography. If proponents of the White City now have, as they have always had, an investment in presenting the neighbourhood and its surroundings as a product of European intellectualism and style, it is because Tel Aviv was deliberately and systemically constructed as a foil to its Middle Eastern origins in Jaffa, a city formerly known as the “Jewel of Palestine” and the main port and centre of Palestinian commercial and cultural life under Ottoman and British rule. The early settlement of Tel Aviv grew out of violent conflict in Jaffa, as Palestinian residents native to the city became resistant to the influx of Jewish migration, particularly as these numbers of migrants increased during the early 1900s, and as these Palestinian residents perceived a “Judaization” of the region, marked by Jewish ownership of land (LeVine 2005:41-42), alongside a proliferation of Jewish nationalist sentiment and political activity. Indeed, while Jews had lived in Jaffa throughout its history, the period surrounding the settlement of Tel Aviv was particularly tense as it highlighted the “mutual embeddedness” of modernity and colonialism that drove Zionism at that time (2005:16). Writing of Tel Aviv in the 1930s, Monterescu and Rabinowitz have noted that the city was “sharply contrasted to Jaffa – Oriental and full of

charm, yet lacking the dynamism, progress and growth of its northern Jewish/European neighbor” (2007:219)

Then as now, Jaffa has symbolized the duality of Oriental Otherness for Jewish Israelis and others foreign to the region, in that it has been conceived as simultaneously dangerous and exotic. “Old Jaffa”, the “revitalized” northern tip of Jaffa, has been a key tourist site for visitors to Tel Aviv and for local Jewish residents of the city who wish to enjoy the perceived Middle Eastern authenticity of the city’s reconstructed Clock Tower, *hummus* restaurants and *nargilah* shops, while not necessarily staying overnight or indeed venturing into the city’s other neighbourhoods, which typically have been known as crime-ridden and poor. Recently, dramatic gentrification has been evident in Jaffa, with the opening of chain retail outlets, the construction of luxury residential complexes, and the rapid development of commercial areas such as the Jaffa Flea Market and, most recently, the Jaffa Port. This has inflated property values and greatly increased Jewish presence in the area, both as residents and as patrons of the many new restaurants, bars and clubs.<sup>43</sup>

Although Jaffa was not a neighbourhood in which many migrants lived and was, therefore, not part of the South Tel Aviv that I discuss below, a cursory knowledge of its past and present provide essential background for understanding the “Black City”.

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<sup>43</sup> Both popular and academic accounts of the gentrification of Jaffa have proliferated in recent years such that the Hebrew word, *gentrificatzia*, has made its way into common speech and is widely used among Jewish and Palestinian Israelis from a variety of different educational backgrounds. These processes of gentrification have, however, been multi-faceted and merit a broader discussion of the complex interplay of state intervention and neglect in the economic and cultural changes that have come to the area. For a discussion of the politicized role of architecture and urban planning in these processes, see LeVine 2001, Monterescu 2009 and Crowe 2011.

“[T]here is no doubt”, according to Rotbard, “that [the city of Tel Aviv] has victors and losers; and if the victor’s story is called ‘White City’, the story of the losers is titled ‘Black City’” (Rotbard 2005). Losing, in this respect, includes Jaffans’ experiences of displacement, disempowerment, and watching the “erasure” and the “erasure of the erasure” (Rotbard 2005) of their own histories and perspectives. But the development of Tel Aviv has generated other so-called losers as well. The story of the “Black City” is not only the story of Palestinians in Jaffa but also the story of *Mizrahim* who have settled South Tel Aviv over the course of its hundred-year history.

Shohat has described *Mizrahim* in Israel as the “Jewish victims” of Zionism (Shohat 1997:39), showing the ways in which they became a “semicolonized nation-within-a-nation” (40), subject to a master narrative of Western, First World modernity that cast them as primitive Orientals in need of reform. While most scholarship on the economic and social marginalization of *Mizrahim* in Israel focuses on the so-called ‘development towns’, that is, government-planned settlements in Israel’s peripheral regions in the Negev and Galilee that were inhabited by *Mizrahim* throughout the 1950s and beyond,<sup>44</sup> I suggest here that Tel Aviv has also been a key site through which

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<sup>44</sup> Development towns were small settlements of 6,000-60,000 people, designed and built by the Israeli government in the early 1950s to absorb the influx of immigrants (particularly *Mizrahim*) who migrated to Israel after the establishment of the state. Built on the ruins of Palestinian villages that had been destroyed or abandoned, the towns also served the broader efforts of the new Zionist establishment to Judaize the Israeli frontier by ‘dispersing the [Jewish] population’ throughout the country, especially into the Galilee to the north and the Negev to the south. Because they were remote and isolated, dedicated to low-yield agricultural production, and populated by new immigrants with low levels of education and social capital, the towns became synonymous with “economic backwardness and deprivation” (Yacobi 2004:124), a reputation that has perpetuated itself as residents were systemically discriminated against in wider labour markets.

*Mizrahim* and *Mizrahi* spaces have been “blackened”, that is, framed as Oriental and inferior to their *Ashkenazi* counterparts.

#### The emergence of South Tel Aviv

Situated between the modernist, cosmopolitan city of Tel Aviv and the exotic but dangerous Oriental city of Jaffa that it bordered to the south, the neighbourhoods that became Nave Sha’an an and Shapira were originally comprised of orchards that serviced the export industry of Jaffa oranges. Early Zionist city planners designated the area as a mixed rural-urban neighbourhood in the 1920s. *Mizrahi* immigrants then steadily settled in this part of the city, particularly in the 1930s and 1950s, as the country absorbed waves of immigrants from Yemen, Iraq and Iran.

But South Tel Aviv is not only a geographic midpoint between Tel Aviv and Jaffa, but also a midpoint in terms of the ethnic, political and class identities that have emerged in the region. *Mizrahim* have often been referred to as “Arab Jews”, particularly by *Mizrahi* academics and activists who have challenged the binary opposition between Arabs and Jews that they see as a product of an *Ashkenazi*-dominated, Zionist agenda and discourse (Shohat 1997; Yiftachel 2006; Shenhav 2006). According to Shohat and others, Zionism has led to the “de-Arabization” of Jews from Middle Eastern countries and has consequently “stripped [them] of the right of self-representation” (1997:39). Even as it has purported to liberate all Jews, the Zionist movement and its *Ashknazi* leaders have dominated Israel’s political and social structures and ideologies. In the name of promoting Israeli nation-building as the outcome of a singular, global and universal

Jewish identity, the “*Mizrahi* question”, and intra-Jewish ethnic conflict in Israel more generally, has been systemically ignored as a political issue (Shenhav 2006:7).

A “Political Zionist” agenda, namely, the image of the Zionist movement as a vehicle for the achievement of a socialist utopia, has similarly obscured the grave economic disparities between *Mizrahi* and *Ashkenazi* Jews. Indeed, while discord between *Mizrahim* and *Ashknazim* has ethnic, linguistic and religious dimensions, it also is a class conflict, based in the emergence of an intra-Jewish class system in Tel Aviv and beyond, in which *Mizrahim* have had limited access to various forms of capital. While *Mizrahim* constituted 45% of the population of Israel in the early 2000s, for example, they constituted only 25% of university students (Shenhav 2006:8). Access to education is a particularly significant marker of class in Israel where an exceptionally high proportion of Israelis - nearly half - have a post-secondary degree (Velmer 2012), and make specific use of such educational credentials in their work and social lives. That *Mizrahim* have had especially low rates of post-secondary education in this context indicates both the effects and perpetuating factors in the socio-economic marginalization and social stratification of this population.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The political and cultural will to discount or diminish class conflict in Israel has been reflected in scholarship on *Mizrahi* life in Israel. There is a wealth of literature documenting the migration and settlement patterns of *Mizrahim* over the course of the country’s history, particularly in the field of Israeli anthropology which has typically focussed on the so-called integration of cultural, religious and ethnic minorities into the national whole. Only a small portion of this scholarship, however, has engaged critically with the political-economic aspects of *Mizrahi* settlement, and less still that has addressed *Mizrahi* life in urban centres (as opposed to areas of the so-called “periphery” of the country), where issues of class and class disparities has been most salient. See Smootha 1993:316-320 for a summary of the causes and effects of an ethno-class system that has systemically disadvantaged *Mizrahi* Jews, both in education and in the workforce.



The development of South Tel Aviv as a class enclave of proletarianized *Mizrahim* was further promoted, in the 1930s and beyond, by the change in the area from a set of mixed rural-urban neighbourhoods to a heavily industrialized urban setting, with factories and warehouses that served the needs of the growing city and with a Central Bus Station through which intercity and local city buses passed. Because it was “neither in Jaffa nor in Tel Aviv” (Rotbard 2009), and therefore subject to distinct regulations regarding taxes and development, the Shapira neighbourhood and the surrounding areas attracted industry and an accompanying urbanization throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While construction of the Central Bus Station began in 1967, it was only completed in 1993; but the enormous building and surrounding parking areas have made for the largest bus terminal in the world,<sup>46</sup> contributing to high levels of pollution and traffic in the area.

As in other cities, the area around the Central Bus Station has attracted transient populations, particularly those for whom cheap and short-term apartment rentals were of primary importance. Illegalized Palestinian workers have gravitated toward this area as have participants in the FWP and illegalized migrants from elsewhere in the world. The area has also generated crime. During my fieldwork, the streets and public spaces around both the “Old Central Bus Station” and the Central Bus Station were known as the centre of drug dealing, prostitution and human trafficking networks. Municipal planning had contributed to the “blackening” of this part of the city as well. Within just a few blocks of the station, the city had permitted the building of a morgue, jail and methadone clinic.

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<sup>46</sup> This was the case until 2010.

Unlicensed businesses have proliferated throughout Nave Sha'anun, and street lights are scarce, as are the municipally-funded trees and benches commonly found in other parts of Tel Aviv.

*Mizrahi* residents who have lived in the neighbourhoods around the Central Bus Station have made efforts, with some success, to engage with municipal political bodies in order to improve safety and public spaces. While many have also made efforts to distance themselves from the illicit activities in and around the Central Bus Station, they have not been able to escape the reputation which associates South Tel Aviv with poverty, degradation and violence. Over the past two decades, South Tel Aviv has also become associated with the presence of foreigners, increasing the already common refrain that the area is "not really Tel Aviv", but a space outside the social and, indeed, racial boundaries of the White City. In the next section I describe how a pro-deportation movement developed in this setting.

### **The image of the limited good and the pro-deportation movement**

Residents of Tel Aviv's southern neighbourhoods during 2009-2011 included working-class *Mizrahi* families who mostly resided in the HaTikva and Shapira neighbourhoods, as well as an ethnically-diverse population of people addicted to drugs and/or working in the sex industry who spent much of their work and leisure time in the Nave Sha'anun neighbourhood. As the anti-deportation campaign grew in size and scope, resulting in the high profile media events and demonstrations which were described in previous chapters, some Israeli citizens began to mobilize against the stated goals and

values of that campaign, expressing the views that migrants were causing problems in Tel Aviv and should therefore not be granted any rights, much less legalized status.<sup>47</sup>

However, the strongest and most cohesive element of this mobilization came from migrants' own neighbours and landlords, local retailers, and the people who circulated regularly among them in shops and on buses.

All these local residents expressed deep resentment of what they saw as their own claims to municipal funds, services, and recognition being ignored while migrants' causes were being championed by a cultural and political elite that was unaware of, or uninvested in, what it was like to live in South Tel Aviv. Their call to action became a prominent one in the deportation debate, as well as in Tel Aviv municipal politics more generally, as they articulated a simple point: Why give so much attention to people who were never supposed to live in Israel in the first place? What about our struggles?

In this context, the pro-deportation mobilization grew to be based on claims related to the social positions of all Tel Aviv residents. Specifically, the southern residents described here, that is, both *Mizrahi* veteran residents and others who circulated the spaces of the southern neighbourhoods, figured themselves as a "threatened majority" (Appadurai 2006:51) in the South, and a neglected minority in the city as a whole.

Migrants were positioned as the source of both this threat and neglect because they occupied resources that were severely limited and that rightfully belonged to residents of

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<sup>47</sup> It is significant that the majority of anti-migrant or pro-deportation mobilizations in South Tel Aviv in 2010 and beyond, focussed on so-called problems caused by African asylum seekers, rather than those caused by other illegalized migrants such as women who had come through the FWP. However, as ethnographic material in this chapter demonstrates, earlier mobilizations of an anti-migrant movement were catalyzed by the deportation debate of 2009 and public support for the anti-deportation campaign.

the South. According to southern residents it was therefore “*al cheshboneinu*” (literally, on our account, or at our expense) that residents of the North – areas that included Tel Aviv’s upper middle class suburbs, such as Ramat Aviv – could enjoy the cheap labour of migrants (who worked in their homes) while simultaneously championing liberal values such as tolerance and multiculturalism.

It can be argued that underlying these claims was the “image of the limited good” (Foster 1965). The anthropologist George Foster used the concept of the “image of the limited good” to describe a “peasant” worldview that he observed in Tzintzuntzan, Michoacan, Mexico in 1965. Foster showed that according to these peasants, the world was a closed environment in which “all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honor, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety *exist in a finite quality and are always in short supply*” (1965:296, my emphasis). Just as Foster observed that these peasants structured their lives according to the “rules of a game” that was inherently competitive and that necessarily created winners and losers, so I perceived residents of the South envisioning their neighbourhoods as sites of competition in which resources and recognition would be divided unequally.

Further, southern residents’ use of the term *cheshbon* (account, also used colloquially as a bill to be paid) reinforced Foster’s secondary point about the image of the limited good. Namely, that if all goods are limited, then the gains of one member of society necessarily come at the expense of another member. As a result, solidarity and co-operation are stunted, and conflict ensues. The following ethnographic vignettes and analyses elaborate on how the image of the limited good was manifested in South Tel

Aviv – an image in which the positioning of migrants as an underclass was perceived as giving them privileged access to limited resources, namely, social and political capital as well as material resources.

#### The scarcity of social and material resources

One evening in early January 2010, Nora, Janet and I participated in a demonstration against an Oz raid on a Ghanaian church. Oz officers had forcibly entered the church – which was located among dozens of African churches on Levanda Street in Nave Sha'anani – in pursuit of illegalized migrants whom they knew to be sleeping there. The raid had occurred just after Christmas and had shocked and enraged congregants of that, and the surrounding, churches. The demonstration that followed was small but imposing. A group of about fifty people gathered in a city parkette on Levanda Street. Those in attendance included the Israeli activists who had organized the demonstration with the pastor and members of the church as well as journalists, researchers, and Israeli and migrant activists from *Israeli Children*. There were several rousing speeches before the crowd disbanded and it was suggested by an Israeli activist with *Israeli Children* that a group of us meet to discuss an upcoming fundraising party. The meeting had run for about fifteen minutes when it was cut short by a woman whose house backed onto the parkette. She angrily approached the Israeli activist and, in Hebrew, told her that all this speaking in English was too noisy and was disrupting the quiet night she was trying to have at home.

As we left, Nora and Janet asked me and two American students, who had attended the demonstration and had then asked to attend the *Israeli Children* meeting, if we all wanted to come to a “*Pinay* [Filipina] party” to celebrate a friend’s birthday. They assured us that the party was just around the corner and that there would be lots of food and dancing. We all went. The apartment was a three-bedroom unit shared among a group of Nora’s friends, mostly live-in caregivers who worked at ‘live-in’ jobs during the week and split the apartment among themselves on their days off. In the small bathroom, I counted six bottles of shampoo and nine bottles of conditioner. Nora later told me that twelve people shared the rent. The party was lively, full of music and food, and with a constant stream of people coming in and out. The party-goers were mostly Filipina women and a few Turkish men, many of whom expressed particular interest in me and the two American students. One small group of women took photos of us, watched carefully what we ate and drank, and encouraged us to dance in the tiny space that had been cleared in the middle of the room. The next day I had several new friend requests on Facebook.

By the time we left, it was late. Both Nora and Janet insisted that we walk through Nave Sha’anan together so as to avoid any “trouble”. Just downstairs from the apartment was a make-shift bar in which about twenty African men were gathered around a television watching a World Cup soccer game. A young Israeli woman approached us as we passed. She wore a dirty shirt and a torn pair of jeans. Her eye make-up was partly smudged across her face and her movements were erratic. She clearly was what Israelis call a “narco” (a drug addict) who lived in the neighbourhood.

The woman strode alongside me as we walked, asking if I was a social worker. I told her that I was a student. She then pointed to the other women, asking about them. I explained that the American women were study-abroad undergraduate students at a private college in Herzliya.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, as Nora, Janet, Janet's son and the Americans walked on ahead, the woman stuck close to me, asking how I knew "those Filipinas", where I had been with them and what we had been doing. I told her about the party, and explained that we were all just friends who had met working on a project together. She said that she knew from my accent that I wasn't Israeli, but was I Jewish? When I said that I was, she stopped and put her hands on both of my shoulders. "Why do you care so much about the Filipinas and not about your own people? Here I am, a Jewish woman, suffering in the street with no money, and all you want to do is be nice to the foreigners."

Nora and Janet called behind them for me to hurry up, looking worried that I was lagging behind. I continued walking with the woman who then started to tell me about the problems she had been having with African men and the terrible state of the neighbourhood because of their presence. I should know, she told me, and I should tell others, about how difficult it was even for a Jewish woman like her to live "this way". Instead of only caring about the Filipinas, I should also care about people like her. When I told her that I had to rush ahead to join my friends she said that all she wanted was for me

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<sup>48</sup> Herzliya is a small city contained within the Tel Aviv district. It is located just north of Ramat Aviv HaHadasha and is one of the most affluent areas in the country. Herzliya, and especially its western-most neighbourhood of Herzliya Pituah, are synonymous in Israel with wealth, luxury and power as they are home to a number of foreign diplomats, businessmen and high-tech entrepreneurs.

to tell Barak Obama about the problems that were developing in South Tel Aviv. Maybe if he cared, then other people would care as well.

This woman, almost certainly addicted to drugs and possibly homeless, represented a minority of the population that lived in the neighbourhoods of South Tel Aviv. Indeed, many other residents of the same neighbourhoods, whose views will be discussed below, would no doubt refuse to be associated with this woman even though they shared the same living space. The woman's presence, however, was central to the problems so often referenced in conversations about the "Black City" of South Tel Aviv. My encounter with her, however, and the evening that preceded it, highlight two points of interest when discussing the social position in Tel Aviv of illegalized migrant women.

First, the events of the evening demonstrated the heterogeneity of the area around the Central Bus Station, particularly in the neighbourhood of Nave Sha'anani. While relatively small, the neighbourhood contained houses and apartments, restaurants, bars, stores, brothels, churches, shelters and social service centres. It was populated by illegalized migrants from dozens of countries as well as Jewish Israeli citizens from a variety of backgrounds. Second, the woman who asked us to leave the parkette and the woman with whom I had a longer conversation articulated an essential part of the resentment that a majority of veteran residents of the South felt with respect to migrants – namely, that the relationships that Filipina women and others had with middle or upper class Israeli citizens and/or foreigners were cause for suspicion and resentment.

Within the framework of the image of the limited good, these relationships represented migrants' access to scarce resources, in this case, the resources of social



mobility and access to power and influence. While Filipina migrant women lived alongside this woman in the “Black City”, gravitating to South Tel Aviv because of cheap rent and proximity to the Central Bus Station, they nevertheless were able to move around in the White City and beyond, as evidenced through their contact with social workers, students, journalists, and other members of a cultural elite, such as those from North America. If, according to the Israeli woman, I had special access to the president of the United States, then so must my friends. Their issues would therefore be noticed and addressed, while hers would remain obscured in the shadows.

This spirit of competition over a limited good was evident in the behaviour of residents of Shapira and HaTikva as well as of Nave Sha’anan. And, it was not just the most severely marginalized residents who were voicing their dissent to migrants’ presence, but veteran residents who were mainly working class and tended to live in large family units and who comprised a majority of the neighbourhood. While they had more money and power than the woman in Nave Sha’anan, they also expressed their suspicion of migrants’ relationships with Israelis from the North. In terms of a limited good perspective, material gains were at stake in these relationships.

I was first made aware of this at meeting of *Israeli Children* in late November, 2009. That evening, about eight of us were sitting on the floor in the office of an NGO, the director of which had offered us the space to use. One of the members explained that she had been in contact a month earlier with the principal at a private alternative school. She had gone to the school herself as a child and knew that the administration often invested time and money in projects that would teach students the value of social justice.

When the *Israeli Children* activist approached the principal to ask if there was anything the school could do to support the group's efforts, the principal suggested that the school sponsor a garden renewal project for the children of migrant workers who lived in the Shapira neighbourhood. The members of *Israeli Children* who were present that night, all Israeli citizens, voiced their approval of this idea. But the woman wasn't finished her report. She continued to explain that the residents of the neighbourhood had blocked the effort when she had approached them with the proposal. A local community leader in Shapira said that the residents did not want to support a project that was directed towards illegalized children when their own children (Jews and Israeli citizens) badly needed the same kind of attention and services.

As we continued to discuss the issue, some activists suggested revising the plan and being explicit with Shapira community leaders that the renewal program would serve everyone in the neighbourhood and not just the children of migrant workers. It was mentioned that one *Israeli Children* activist, who had also worked with a municipal political group, had already been in extensive contact with Shapira community leaders and activists and might, therefore, be able to broker a deal that would suit all parties. The general consensus among those at the meeting, however, was that any such efforts would be unsatisfactory to the neighbourhood residents and activists and that they would likely not participate in the project anyway because of its assumption that the migrants' presence was a permanent one, and because of the source of the funds, and because of the ways in which the project had been presented to their community.

The decision was made not to pursue the project. This highlighted, on the one hand, frustration on the part of activists from the North who earlier had been engaged in trying to forge links between migrants' rights' activism and the activism of residents of the South. On the other hand, it highlighted their conclusion that the project wouldn't work and that this was well-founded considering the recent swell of organized mobilizations that was beginning to build in both Shapira and HaTikva and that was directed against both migrants and their allies from the North.

A few weeks before this particular *Israeli Children* meeting I had attended a demonstration at a community centre in Shapira. The municipal government had cut funding to the centre which provided programs for local seniors and which also offered a language class geared toward migrants. The tension at the demonstration was palpable as about sixty local residents, illegalized migrants and activists from the North all converged on the community centre. While the message of all the different activists was the same, that funding should not be cut, I witnessed several heated conversations between local residents and migrants' rights activists. People whom I knew from anti-deportation activities were challenged on a number of occasions. They were asked to identify where they were from, and to state their purpose in being there. This was the first, but certainly not the last time, I heard the word *Tzfonim* (Northerners) used harshly to identify activists who were not from the neighbourhood.

Later that evening, I accompanied some friends – activists who had grown up in North Tel Aviv, who were involved in the anti-deportation campaign and who, significantly, were all of *Ashkenazi* descent – to a demonstration that was being held in

the HaTikva neighbourhood. This was the first of several such demonstrations, geared specifically towards the migrant issue. The activists had received text messages from people who were already in the neighbourhood suggesting that some violence had broken out. When we arrived at the HaTikva marketplace, we learned that the violence had been a rumour. There was, however, a crowd of about forty South Tel Aviv residents who had gathered around a makeshift platform and who were becoming increasingly agitated. They were passing around a megaphone to whomever wished to speak, each articulating frustration over feeling crowded in their “own neighbourhood”, fearful on their “own streets”, and anger that apartments next to where they lived were being occupied by large groups of migrants who packed into small rooms with no regard for hygiene or safety.

Speakers mostly rallied around the idea of “transferring” migrants from the southern neighbourhoods in which they lived, to the northern neighbourhoods in which they worked. These northern neighbourhoods were areas with large, manicured parks, spacious apartments and views of the sea. The use of the terms “transfer” or “population transfer” was important. Historically, these terms were used in Israeli political discourse to refer to Zionist projects of removing the Palestinian population from lands that Jews planned to settle. In this way, the speakers implicitly located anti-migrant sentiment as part of a Zionist logic. Transfer projects, beginning during the British mandate and continually discussed and planned over the course of the next several decades, were promoted as solutions to the projected demographic threat that Palestinians in Israel posed to Zionists. The term transfer, described by many critics of Zionist policies and practices as a euphemism for expulsion, confiscation of land and erasure of local history alongside

the broader goal of ethnic cleansing (see Shahak 1989, Blecher 2002, 2005), have long been seen by many in Israel as moral and modern practices that would serve as solutions for so-called demographic problems and as alternatives to potential violence (Morris 2001:140).

The positioning of anti-migrant sentiment as part of a nationalist and Zionist imperative, therefore, was obvious through the rhetoric of the pro-deportation campaign. More relevant to a discussion of the idea of a limited good, however, were the particular Zionist tropes that gained traction in this context. Specifically, I refer here to conceptions of space as a finite good or resource that was vulnerable to domination by one group or another. Configured as a material resource that was severely limited and at a premium in the already crowded southern neighbourhoods, space was not something that South Tel Aviv residents felt could be shared among groups with different notions of how the space should or could be used. I couldn't help but notice throughout the evening in HaTikva's outdoor market that even the interactions that occurred on the most micro-level demonstrated the contestation of space. Shopkeepers became increasingly aggressive as the evening wore on, pushing people away from their fruit and houseware stands and complaining that the protest was blocking the walkway between shops and infringing on their businesses. Even as they expressed agreement with the speakers, shopkeepers also articulated resentment over the marketplace being used for something other than commerce. Their daily activities and needs were being reduced for and by others around them; and space was the resource which underlay this.

Discussions about the so-called weekly “take-over” of Levinsky Park, a green space and children’s playground just across from the Central Bus Station, exemplified the same concern over space as a resource which could be lost, accumulated or even hoarded – that is, subject to processes of re-allocation among local people but not expanded. On Saturdays, the only day off for most live-in caregivers and for other migrants whose employers observed the Jewish Sabbath, Levinsky Park became a centre for social activity as it filled with migrants who had travelled to Tel Aviv from various parts of the country. Over the course of a Saturday afternoon, both large and small groups of Indian, Nepali, Chinese and Filipino migrants would gather in the park, sitting on nearly every available patch of grass and having barbecues and picnics while catching up with friends.

Migrants from elsewhere in the country were obviously motivated to inhabit the park because they lacked access to indoor space in Tel Aviv. Public areas, including churches and city parks, were the only spaces that were available to them. Moreover, migrants who lived in, or rented apartments in Tel Aviv itself also lacked indoor space. Notoriously high rents in the city meant that migrants’ apartments were usually tiny, converted spaces that were crowded with people’s belongings (because there were no closets or cabinets). They often lacked in windows and a natural flow of air, and offered only floor space or beds as a place where guests could sit. I remember these apartments as stifling and oppressively hot at all times of the year. I consequently never wondered why migrants were so inclined to occupy public parks and beaches, even as they feared the presence of Oz officials and the prospect of being deported.

Despite understanding, as neighbours and landlords of migrants, that migrants' private apartments were unsuitable for leisure and social activities, residents of South Tel Aviv nevertheless expressed resentment that migrants used public spaces so frequently and in such large numbers. A common refrain voiced by South Tel Aviv residents was that, on Saturdays, they could not escape either the loud music or the smell of foods being cooked on small stoves throughout the park. This was particularly offensive to them because, as many expressed explicitly, it interfered with their observing of *Shabbat* as a day of rest. Residents cited boisterous activity, especially the use of electronic equipment, as disruptive to their religious practices.

It was therefore not just migrants' presence in public spaces that was problematic, but that their use of the space signalled migrants' domination of the neighbourhood on both symbolic as well as material levels. Their numbers gave them the tactical ability and power to redefine the meaning of space. This was a strategic power that local residents of the neighbourhood did not have, and perceived that they had not had for several years. Most importantly, it was a power that southern residents *could not* or *would not* ever have again if migrants were to be politically or socially enfranchised. More generally, to return to Foster's view, resources such as social capital and mobility, access to power and public space were seen as being in limited supply and available to one person or category of person only at the expense of another.

The scarcity of political concern: A challenge from the “Black City” to the “white left”

It was also over the course of the pro-deportation movement that political concern or attention was configured as a scarce resource. Just as the woman who I met on Nave Sha’an’an was concerned that I had political capital and was using it to help my Filipina friends instead of her, so did other residents of the South express their anger and frustration over the ways in which the anti-deportation campaign, and the struggle for migrants’ rights more generally, were taking energy and political will away from the causes that were important to them. This was yet another element underlying the pro-deportation mobilization that tapped into long-standing tensions between the South and the North, thereby positioning migrants in between and framing them as catalysts for conflict. Specifically, anger over the scarcity of political concern – that is, concern that would come from state bureaucrats – drew from southern residents’ general mistrust of the political motivations and capacities of what sometimes was called the “white left”,<sup>49</sup> Ashkenazi Israelis who were labelled, by those who did not consider themselves to be ‘leftists’, as misguided in their Western, liberal perspectives on Israel and Judaism.

The deportation debate enhanced these perspectives on the “white left”. While entering a fundraising concert, organized by *Israeli Children* and attended by several

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<sup>49</sup> The use of the term leftist, or *smolani* in Hebrew, is pervasive in Israeli culture and describes one side of the dichotomy that has been constructed around the pursuit of peace with Palestinians. To ‘be left’ or considered ‘left’ in Israel encompasses a range of perspectives that includes, as in the Zionist Left, a commitment to the preservation of a Jewish State in Israel or as in the so-called radical left, an anti-Zionist stance supported by a commitment to working towards Palestinian sovereignty and statehood. The literature on the Israeli left is extensive. Most relevant here, however, is that the term is often used in a derogatory sense by self-identified religious nationalists who frame the left as elitist and secular. The intersections of class and race/ethnicity referenced by the term “white left” will be addressed below.



Zionist youth groups, I met a man who identified himself as a resident of the Shapira neighbourhood. He was handing out flyers detailing his disagreement with the anti-deportation campaign. *The Chorus of Hypocrites*, as the flyer was titled, ended with this pointed statement.

We call all those who struggle to let the children of illegal aliens stay in Israel to free themselves from the influence of the media and to consider rationally whether these children and their families would not be better off returning to their homeland and whether our moral commitment to the aforesaid children is greater than the concern for the residents of the South and the periphery, who suffer daily from the presence of the foreign workers.

This call to action summarized four paragraphs of the rest of the document which took specific aim at the so-called hypocrisy of an *Ashkenazi*-dominated media that espoused the rights of migrants while ignoring those of other marginalized populations in Israel who were more deserving of the public's compassion and of the state's protection. The Shapira activist explained to me that if these "leftists", a term often used interchangeably with *Tzfonim* or Northerners, could only engage with the deportation debate in rational and not emotional terms, they would see how it did not make sense to give time and attention to people who would never be a part of the Israeli family. Although not framed explicitly in this way, resentment of the links between migrants and north Tel Avivis was a critique of the maternalism described in the previous chapter on inclusive exclusion. Both the woman who stopped me on Nave Sha'anani, and the Shapira resident who was handing out flyers, were angry about the responsibility and concern that north Tel Avivis demonstrated toward migrants, and by implication, not toward them.

The configuration of political concern as a limited good was not exclusive to southern residents. Indeed, the perception that political attention and empathy existed

only in finite quantities, and the mobilization of this sentiment in public ways, has long pervaded all classes, ethnicities, and religious groups in Israel. During the deportation debate, in late August 2010, for example, at a demonstration marking abducted Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit's, fifth birthday in *Hamas* captivity, the soldier's mother referred to the years of political lobbying that she and her husband had been engaged in as they worked to pressure the government to negotiate the release of their son. Aviva Shalit then directly addressed Sara Netanyahu, the wife of Prime Minister Netanyahu. "Your name appeared in the headlines due to your concern for the children of the migrant workers. I am obliged to remind you of one child who is already a young man. He calls out to you from Gaza. Do not ignore him" (Hasson, Ravid and Harman, 2010). Shalit's remarks framed her cause, then five years old, as one that was in danger of being ignored and/or obscured by new political concerns. While the Shalits were middle-class *Ashkenazi* Jews, unaffected by any particular history of marginalization in the Israeli public realm, they nevertheless approached their politics aggressively and from the perspective of needing to locate their cause as part of a competition among causes.

For *Mizrahi* Jews in South Tel Aviv, however, and particularly for activists who had experienced the dismissal and/or silencing of *Mizrahi* mobilizations in the past, this spirit of competition took on an especially immediate and aggressive tone during the deportation debate. Southern activists expressed the view that the sympathy for migrants was simply the newest incarnation of *Mizrahi* marginalization, and even demonization, at the hands of a Northern, *Ashkenazi* elite. Their response to such injustice was to convey the depth of their suffering and victimization, another competitive strategy that would

highlight their entitlement to the scarce resource of political concern. An event organized by the municipal political group *Ir Lekulanu*<sup>50</sup> brought this aspect of the South Tel Aviv mobilization to light.

On an afternoon in March 2010, members of *Ir Lekulanu* and invited guests gathered for a 'tour' of South Tel Aviv that would be led by one of the Shapira neighbourhood's most prominent *Mizrahi* activists, and attended by migrant and refugee advocates who worked in the area. The purpose of the tour, as was explained to the tour group by the *Ir Lekulanu* representative who introduced it, was to address a lack of communication that had led to considerable conflict among migrants and residents of the South and to put all local residents in conversation with one another as a way of ameliorating the situation. It was acknowledged that there was a problem in South Tel Aviv. *Ir Lekulanu*, aligned closely with the Arab-Jewish, communist political party, *Hadash*, and made up of influential *Mizrahi* and *Ashkenazi* activists in Tel Aviv, had been engaged with this issue in the past and was well-positioned to address the nuances of the situation. Tour-goers were informed that this event was designed to foster understanding by allowing all parties (albeit with the significant absence of migrants or asylum seekers) to explain their positions and air any grievances.

Yehuva was the head of the *Mizrahi* feminist organization, *Achoti* (meaning, My Sister), and the leader of the tour. The tour group met in *Achoti*'s main office, a small set of rooms just off of Levinsky Street, that was decorated with photographs, paintings and

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<sup>50</sup> *Ir Lekulanu*, literally "City for all of us", is defined by its mayoral candidate, Dov Khenin, as an "urban, non-party...[with a] willingness to tackle problems of traffic, housing and education, ecological and social issues, discrimination and inequality..." (Khenin, city4all.org.il)

sculptures of African women. There were approximately twelve tour participants, the majority of whom were Tel Aviv residents of *Ashkenazi* descent in their late 20s and early 30s. After introducing herself as a “child of the neighbourhood”, an aspect of her identity she reinforced several times throughout the tour, Yehuva outlined a litany of problems that she told us had been brought on or exacerbated by migrants’ presence in the area. Chief among her complaints was the growing violence in the South, a problem that she viewed as being perpetuated by black men. Women she knew, who lived in the area, “suffered constantly” from fear. Many felt trapped in their houses. Speaking quickly and loudly, Yehuva became more agitated as she gave examples of episodes of harassment and/or violence that she had heard about from local women. Of course, she explained to the group, these did not get reported in the press as the daily difficulties of living in the South were not issues that the rest of Tel Aviv was interested in hearing about.

As if preemptively addressing what she knew to be the reaction of the group, Yehuva emphasized that her views and the views of her friends and family was *not* a product of racism. Of course, she told the tour-goers, southern residents were called racists by high-minded North Tel Avivis who had no obligation to deal with the indignities that she and her neighbours faced on a regular basis. This was particularly infuriating to her, as it represented so much *Ashkenazi* superiority and ignorance. No one, as she explained to the group, helped black women the way that her organization did. She and her colleagues were the ones who were giving essential aid and support to migrant women on a daily basis while people from outside the neighbourhood preferred to show their support for migrants through parties and protests – ostentatious displays that she

imagined made them feel better about themselves without actually doing anything practical. “And then they call us racists!”

Yehuva’s impassioned introduction to the tour stretched on, as she expressed her neighbours’ collective resentment for being the “garbage can” of the city. Migrants were just another ‘thing’ that was unwanted in North Tel Aviv and thus imposed on the South. While Yehuva’s comments of the “dumping” of migrants in South Tel Aviv were based on a general critique of the government’s recruitment of “foreign workers” and its inability to secure Israel’s southern border with Egypt to prevent asylum seekers from Africa, they also implicitly referenced stories that I heard throughout 2010 that African asylum seekers, in particular, were being given free transportation to Levinsky Park from other parts of the country and city. Accounts of migrants being “bussed into” South Tel Aviv proliferated during my research, exacerbating the resentment of southern residents that they were paying for the whole country’s political and social problems.

The most egregious example of the South as a “garbage can” for the city, according to Yehuva, was the Central Bus Station, a polluting eyesore that represented complete disregard for southern residents’ health and welfare. Using an image that is well-worn and yet perpetually effective in the Israeli context, Yehuva then told the group that she and her neighbours were living in a “gas chamber”, getting “gassed” everyday by the fumes from the station. As we left the office to finally begin the tour, Yehuva pointed out a soup kitchen that had been constructed in an old *Sephardi* synagogue. “Yes”, she told us, “these services were important, but why did they have to be constructed there?”

The municipal plan represented a clear indifference to the significance of religion and community among residents of the South.

The tour continued along Levinsky Street and through the park, where Yehuva ran into various people who knew her and who were curious about the tour. A heated debate turned into a screaming match as an elderly woman and, then, a middle-aged man, both self-identified, veteran residents of the neighbourhood, levelled accusations at some of the tour-goers whom they recognized as migrant advocates and service workers. It was those Northerners just as much as the migrants, according to the elderly woman, who were robbing local residents of the life that they wanted and deserved. All the migrants, most of whom were fake refugees or Muslim infiltrators, needed to be sent home immediately, so that the neighbourhood could be cleansed of such impurities and returned to a state of peace. The middle-aged man added that any friends of migrants were traitors and fools – “*yafe nefesh*” (bleeding hearts) – who were unaware of the long-term effects of Israel taking responsibility for other people’s problems. Did they want violent drunks in their neighbourhoods in the North?

Yehuva initially tried to mediate the conversation, filtering the woman and man’s explicitly racist language and comments through the analysis that she had offered to the group before. But as the migrants’ rights activists who were on the tour began to respond to the southern residents with their own accusations of intolerance and insensitivity, Yehuva quickly abandoned her role and mediator and encouraged both the man and woman to express themselves fully. Addressing the tour-goers, some of whom she knew as so-called radical left activists (that is, individuals actively engaged with Palestinian

solidarity work), Yehuva raised her voice above the arguments already in process and asked provocatively: “You want to talk about the Occupation? Look at the Occupation here. There’s an Occupation in Tel Aviv.”

The tour continued despite raised tensions among the group, and ended over two hours later when Yehuva explained that she needed to visit her mother who was old and frail and living in a dilapidated apartment that her landlords refused to fix. On that final note, describing the ongoing poverty and devastation of the neighbourhood, Yehuva thanked us all for coming and expressed sincere interest in continuing a conversation so that real improvements might be made. As the group slowly dispersed another discussion began over the proposed building of an arts college in the area surrounding the Old Central Bus Station. One of the tour participants, himself a *Mizrahi* activist and sociology professor, explained that the neighbourhood would soon be completely gentrified, forcing the majority of the people who lived there, both migrants and veteran residents, to seek cheap rent further out on the margins of the city.

The tour encapsulated many of the tensions that had been escalating in the area, tensions over the course of the anti-deportation and pro-deportation mobilizations. These tensions, and the underlying resentments, were not simply discursive. Indeed, violence was breaking out in South Tel Aviv, albeit not in the way that many veteran residents were narrating it. Just a month before the tour, an organized Oz raid entitled “Operation City of Foreigners” included an aggressive sweep of Nave Sha’an an in which migrant men from Eritrea and Sudan were arrested and detained. The media had earlier reported a few robberies and violent altercations among Eritreans, and Oz issued a public statement

explaining that it was conducting the raid in order to keep the neighbourhood safe. Additionally, reports of migrants being beaten, and later, of migrant-owned businesses having rocks thrown through their windows as part of anti-migrant protests, filled the press, especially in the early part of 2012, when tensions in the area reached a violent, fever pitch.

Some *Mizrahi* activists who had been affiliated with *Ir Lekulanu* were themselves part of an episode that began peacefully but turned aggressive and antagonistic, if not outright violent. A small group of activists had attended a large anti-deportation demonstration at the end of March, 2010. Setting themselves apart from the main demonstrators by holding a sign that said “Enough of the hypocrisy of the White Left”, these activists stood in front of the bus that had been privately contracted to transport mostly Filipina, migrant women and their children to and from South Tel Aviv to the demonstration in the city centre. At the end of the demonstration, when the group returned to the bus, the *Mizrahi* activists blocked the entrance, shouting insults at the activists from *Israeli Children* who had organized the transportation. The altercation was brief, but telling. It foreshadowed other such moments and events in which migrants were quite literally placed between duelling factions in Tel Aviv.

This fierce competition for what was perceived as a scarcity of political concern and legitimate victimhood was evident in both this action and in the *Ir Lekulanu* tour. But two additional aspects of this competition, and of the salience of the image of the limited good more generally, can be drawn out from the above examples. First, in the tour as in the multitude of pro-deportation and anti-migrant activism that followed from it, the



resentment among residents of the South highlighted the notion that morality too was limited. According to the southern, *Mizrahi* narrative, *Ashkenazi* Jews hypocritically claimed moral rights for themselves and extended these to include migrants. In contrast, *Mizrahim*, for their part, were upholding the morality of the nation as a whole in their efforts to be religiously observant, follow traditional Jewish lifestyles, and preserve a Zionist dream. The responsibility for this had been foisted upon them, and then left entirely in their care, by a secular *Ashkenazi* establishment no longer interested in the burden. These forms of morality were constituted as mutually exclusive: only one morality could exist at a time. Morality was therefore a limited resource, as the elderly woman who spoke at the tour said: “You [Northerners] care about human rights? What about *our* rights?” Her tacit rejection of the notion that human rights, migrants’ rights and *Mizrahi* rights could be part of the same political project, was not uncommon. Just as Foster saw that an image of the limited good severely damaged the potential for solidarity in a Mexican village (1965), so too did it derail efforts at collaboration among South Tel Avivis, North Tel Avivis and the migrants who fell in between them.

Second, this view of scarcity, this atmosphere of competition, this lack of solidarity – as well as the rare but overt violence against migrants – ironically promoted and perpetuated negative stereotypes of *Mizrahim*. The allegations of racism and fierce ignorance among *Mizrahim* in South Tel Aviv that Yehuva mentioned, proliferated in the Israeli media during my research. While such allegations were sometimes not untrue, they neglected to consider the deep context from which the “Black City” and its “blackened” *Mizrahi* residents emerged. Drawing from Said’s observations of how Orientalism

exacerbates existing power relations and also creates new ones, Shohat has written about the plight of “Oriental Jews” in Israel. Orientalism, she paraphrases, is “the process by which one pole of the East/West dichotomy is produced and reproduced as rational, developed, superior, and human, and the other as aberrant, underdeveloped, and inferior...”(1997:40) The narrative that European Jews “took [Arab Jews] out of ‘primitive conditions’ of poverty and superstition and ushered them gently into a Western society characterized by tolerance, democracy, and ‘human values’...” (1997:40-41) was intrinsic to this very process. Thus, racist accusations among *Mizrahi* Jews against migrants were a new incarnation of the Orientalist power dynamic as it was being played out in Tel Aviv. Migrants were wedged in between so-called modern and enlightened Jews as against the backwards and primitive ones. As a privileged underclass, their status aggravated and intensified local race and class relations, at the same time that they obscured the underlying factors that had produced them.

## **Conclusions**

Migrants’ relations with their southern *Mizrahi* neighbours and their northern *Ashkenazi* allies has made them into residents of Tel Aviv who are both marginalized and enfranchised in terms that are especially significant to the history and social geography of the city. In this chapter, I have framed these relations as indicative of one of the outcomes of the politics of intimacy, namely, that illegalized migrants and migrant mothers in particular, have become a privileged underclass in Tel Aviv society, occupying a complex and unique position among the varied social and class groups in the city.

I have shown that illegalized migrant mothers have typically lived in the poorest and most underserved neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv. They have been vulnerable to exploitation and abuse – at the hands of Oz, their employers and other citizens and non-citizens with whom they regularly interact – due to their position as illegalized city residents who lack the rights afforded to citizens, have limited mobility in the labour market and are bound to precarious work by their financial obligations to support themselves, their children and other relatives (both in Israel and elsewhere).

At the same time, however, illegalized migrant mothers have come to occupy positions of privilege relative to other migrants in Tel Aviv and to some of their Israeli citizen neighbours. I have shown in this chapter, and throughout the thesis, that during 2009-2011 illegalized migrant mothers were situated at the centre of social and political debates on topics as significant to Israeli society, and to constructions of national narratives, as Israeli immigration policy, Jewish morality and the humanitarian responsibility and capacity of the Israeli state and government. These women were defended in these debates, by their powerful friends and allies including popular figures in the media and in politics, as well as highly educated and enfranchised Tel Aviv citizens. As these powerful allies advocated for the rights of illegalized migrant women and their children, they also celebrated them as valued members of Tel Aviv and Israeli society. While I have described how these forms of advocacy were fraught with uneven power dynamics, and did not always serve the interests of all migrants, I have also described ways in which advocacy generated mainstream support for many migrants,

elevating their social status and contributing to their ability access resources that their historically marginalized South Tel Aviv neighbours had been denied.

By using the idea of the limited good, specifically the fact that space, social capital, empathy and political concern were considered scarce resources in Tel Aviv and thus objects that had to be competed over, I've explored one of the main impacts that migrants' have had on the deeply complex and divided society of Israel's largest urban centre. Specifically, that illegalized migrant mothers and their children have become embedded in Tel Aviv's ethnic and class hierarchy, exacerbating existing conflicts within that hierarchy, even as they bring new manifestations of those conflicts to the fore.

**OPEN ENDINGS:  
An illegalized birth one year later**

Liat was just under a year old at her baptism, a small ceremony held in St. Peter's Church in Old Jaffa. When we got to the church courtyard on a chilly December evening, Liat was restless, sniffing from the effects of a bad cold and squirming under the many layers of her white chiffon dress. Lupe stood holding her, smiling at me as she took off the tiny white sequined headband Liat had been wearing. "La pobrecita, she can barely breathe but she's doing so well".

It was Christmas Day and the main sanctuary of the nearly four hundred year-old Franciscan Church was unavailable because of the schedule of masses, in various languages, that had been running steadily since the night before. Konkani at 6:00, Polish at 7:00, Tagalog at 8:00. Lupe had come a few weeks earlier to speak to Padre Francisco, the Mexican priest who was responsible for Spanish masses. He had told her that the twenty-fifth was the earliest possible day to have the baptism and that he would be happy to perform the ceremony as long as Lupe was willing to share the event with a group of South American tourists whom he was taking to Bethlehem earlier in the day. We were to use a small room at the far end of the church, one of the sanctuaries that had a domed ceiling and walls constructed out of Jerusalem stone. Lupe told the priest that she was fine sharing. She wasn't expecting too many people. Maybe five or ten friends who would come to the Church and then to a dinner that someone was organizing for the group afterward at her home. She had invited her employers as well, she told me, but she was unsure if they would be able to make it.

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Just before the ceremony, Lupe and Liat's godparents met with Sister Gloria, a nun who was responsible for discussing a booklet called *Living the Baptism* with them. Just as Sister Gloria had finished explaining the ceremony, its meanings and the responsibilities of each member of the party for that day and throughout the baby's life, Liat's godfather, Carlos, asked how he would be able to collect the baptism records once the ceremony was over. Sister Gloria assured him that the records would be kept in St. Peter's Church and that when Liat was ready to get married, she would only have to return there to obtain proof of her Catholic baptism. Carlos smiled and thanked the nun for her assurance but said that he would nevertheless prefer to take the document with him so that he could hold it for Liat and make sure that she had it wherever she might be and whenever she might want it. The nun considered his request but determined that the Church would have to keep the records there. Anyway, she wanted us all to move into the sanctuary since it was just about 6:00pm and they would be ready to start.

Liat's baptism was a traditional and simple ceremony, initiating her into the Catholic Church in a centuries-old ritual that Padre Francisco told us he had performed more than a dozen times in his short career. Simple as it was, however, her baptism, like her birth, took place within the complex politics of intimacy that developed in Tel Aviv during 2009-2011. Specifically, the ceremony and related events can be seen to depict how, during this period, illegalized migrant women and their children were in an interdependent, yet power-laden relationship with Israeli structures and ideologies. From the moment that they were recruited to work in Israel, and over the course of their daily

lives in Tel Aviv, illegalized women's decisions and strategies for living were shaped by the policies, laws, bureaucratic practices and socio-cultural expectations of the Israeli state, government and society, particularly in cases where they became pregnant and/or mothers. In turn, the decisions and strategies of illegalized migrant mothers had an unprecedented impact on the structures and ideologies of Israeli society. An impact that superceded that of their male counterparts both during 2009-2011, and prior to that period. Far from being marginal to this society, as may have been suggested by their designation as so-called temporary or illegalized migrants, and the fact of their being women in the precarious, illegalized and often invisible labour sectors of eldercare and domestic work, these women were, in fact, central to the way in which Tel Aviv society developed during the period in which they lived there.

This thesis has been written as a way to describe and analyze the power-laden interdependence of illegalized migrant mothers' relationship with Israeli structures and ideologies. I suggest that the politics of intimacy that characterizes this relationship can be understood as a macrocosm of the social patterns and relationships that scholars of domestic and care workers have identified. Namely that workers' freedom is determined, and often constrained, by uneven power relations and the potential for exploitation inherent in the employment relationship, particularly for illegalized workers' whose limited mobility in the wider labour market further increase their vulnerability to abuse in the jobs that they are able to secure. At the same time workers' near-constant presence in their employers' homes as well as the importance of their labour, the emotional quality of this labour, and the impressions that they make – both individually and collectively – as

women who are both capable and needy contribute in meaningful ways to the power that workers wield over aspects of their own lives and over aspects of their employers' lives. This power is not insignificant as it also contributes to how domestic and care workers build social and material capital over time.

Just as the power dynamics that characterize domestic and care workers' relationships with their employers are nuanced and complex in their intimacy, so are the power dynamics that characterize the intimate relationship between illegalized women and the structures and ideologies of Israeli society. As the story of Liat's baptism shows, constraints on, and complications of, the lives of illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv are ever-present, even as these migrants engage with Israeli society in unprecedented ways. I argue here that there is still cause for hope for individual migrants as for migrants as a collective as the increasing numbers of illegalized women and children in Israel and the particularities of their engagements with Israeli society have the potential to slowly erode the foundations of migrants' structural oppression. While this process may reinforce structural power along the way, as the ethnography in this thesis has shown, the process also has the potential to alter that power over time.

In this conclusion, I use Liat's baptism as a way to draw the thesis to a close, analyzing this fraught moment in light of the themes that I have addressed, and taking it as a point of departure for a discussion of future ethnographic and theoretical possibilities. I do this in two overlapping ways. First, I provide an unfinished epilogue to the ethnography presented here, revisiting Lupe and Liat as well as the other women whose stories I have described and situating these stories in the broader changes that occurred in



Tel Aviv over the course of my research and in a subsequent visit which I made to Israel two years later, in July 2012. Following from the previous chapter on illegalized migrant women as a *Privileged Underclass*, I briefly describe how the baptism and ongoing deportation debate exemplify an outcome of the politics of intimacy, namely, that the presence of illegalized children has perpetuated their own and their mothers' "tense and tender ties" (Stoler 2000) with Israeli society. In the terms that I have defined in this thesis, these engagements demonstrate how intimacy is a socio-political condition through which illegalized migrant mothers and their locally-born children are deeply integrated into the structures and ideologies of Israeli society, but always in precarious and conditional ways. In the second part of this chapter, I return to the key questions of this thesis, summarizing my analysis of the politics of intimacy and suggesting some points of interest that lie beyond these pages.

While I offer some closing thoughts on the themes of the thesis throughout both of the sections in this concluding chapter, I see these remarks less as conclusions, than as observations on another aspect of intimacy as a socio-political condition: that is, that the intimacy which develops between individuals and the society in which they live is characterized by open endings. I've argued, in the previous chapters, that the lives of illegalized migrants, especially the mothers and their children who have been the main subjects of this thesis, are particularly subject to precariousness, unpredictability and a general inability to rely on previous patterns and events. In addition to the legal and temporal limbo in which they are made to live as people who are illegalized, these women are also subject to the especially open-ended social and political processes of the place in

which they live. In the context of Israel and Tel Aviv where political changes are often contested and always likely to generate an active public response, these migrants have learned to live as Israelis do, with a healthy suspicion of any declared certainty, particularly on the political front. All endings are therefore open and seen to be open. The interdependent relationship between illegalized migrants and the structures and ideologies of the Israeli state and government is thus one that is ongoing, even as individual migrants are granted status while others are deported. Liat's baptism and the following descriptions of the politics of intimacy as they operated in it, as well as the continuation of the deportation debate, illustrate this point.

**An unfinished epilogue:**

**Liat's baptism against the backdrop of the ongoing deportation debate**

Liat's baptism took place on December 25, 2010, four days after a large and heated anti-migrant protest in the HaTikvah neighbourhood, and one day after the most widely attended refugee-rights march in Tel Aviv's history. In her short life, Liat had witnessed an unprecedented increase in activities related to the rights of illegalized residents of Tel Aviv, a trend that had grown out of the earlier deportation debate and which now had polarized city residents on all issues related to migration. Her own future and that of her mother hung in the balance as the deportation debate catalyzed new political and social mobilizations and initiated new discussions in the *Knesset* (Parliament), the *Bagatz* (Supreme Court of Justice), the popular media and on the streets of Tel Aviv.

The vignette that opened this chapter alludes to the complexities inherent in Lupe and Liat's shared status as permanently temporary, visibly invisible and inclusively excluded residents of Tel Aviv. It shows that both mother and daughter had to contend with being entrenched in local institutions and communities such as the Church, Lupe's friendship group, Liat's daycare, Lupe's employers, and the various social service and medical institutions with which Lupe and Liat had formally registered. Simultaneously, they had to be prepared to leave or to be expelled from Tel Aviv and all these affiliations at any moment. When Carlos asked Sister Gloria for Liat's baptism records, he was articulating a key dilemma in the lives of illegalized people: how to strike a balance between entrenchment and mobility; how to forge a strong connection with a local community while controlling how that connection might be managed over time and across space.

Sister Gloria's response that the records would be kept *for* Liat but could not be released *to* her, represented the paternalism that characterised the interdependent but always constrained engagements of illegalized women and their children with the structures and ideologies of Israeli social and political life, in this case, of the nominally-independent Catholic Church. While these women and their children were able to forge strategic ties and become entrenched in state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic/administrative practices and socio-cultural expectations, ultimately they were only successful in doing so as vulnerable Others who were subject to the tension and tenderness of these engagements. The varied and ongoing outcomes of the deportation debate further illustrate this point.

By the end of 2010, hundreds of the children of illegalized migrants had responded to the ruling in August that year and were awaiting responses to their applications for permanent residency. Those who had been deemed eligible by the criteria (approximately eight hundred of the original 1,200) had scrambled to assemble the documents required to prove that the children had been born in Israel, were over five years old, had parents who had arrived to Israel with valid work visas, had been enrolled in an Israeli state school the previous year and were registered for first grade or higher for the year to come. Activists from *Israeli Children* had campaigned unsuccessfully to have the deadline for applications extended, as many of those who were eligible for permanent residency status found it difficult or impossible to obtain documents – from schools that were closed in the summer or hospitals with extensive bureaucracies – in the 30 days allotted to them by the government.

Migrant mothers who did manage to apply on behalf of their children were interviewed by Ministry of Interior personnel and told to wait for further instructions. Nora laughed awkwardly as she told me, in December 2010, about her own interview. She explained that she had been questioned separately from her grandson, Angel, and asked, among other things, about what colour underwear he wore and what language they spoke to each other in the home. Still physically and bureaucratically invisible as Angel's mother, Nora was called upon to prove that she was, in fact, his primary and permanent guardian and thus permitted to apply for permanent residency status on his behalf and to be granted legal status for herself if their application was successful. When I saw Nora

again in July 2012, Angel's case was still pending and the two were still living as illegalized residents of Tel Aviv.

While they had also been called in for interviews in the winter of 2010, by July 2012, Grace had been successful in her application for permanent residency status for her daughter, Manuela, and Janet had successfully applied for permanent residency status for her son, Francisco. Grace was particularly jubilant as she showed me her and Manuela's new identification cards that she carried with her in a leather case in her purse. Manuela's card indicated that she had permanent residency status that would be converted to full citizenship status when she reached adulthood. Grace's card indicated that she had legal residency status that had to be renewed annually and that would be converted to permanent residency, but not citizenship, when Manuela reached adulthood. Grace told me that, for the first time in 11 years, she was planning a trip to the Philippines to visit the family that she had there, and to introduce them to Manuela. Since she was once again legalized in Israel, she explained, and since Manuela now had residency status, the two were finally permitted to enter and exit the country as they liked, with no fear of being detained, deported or turned away upon their return.

Janet was more reserved than Grace about her new identification card, telling me that she was happy to have legal status for herself and for her son, but that she wasn't sure how much it would change their daily lives. Indeed, in July 2012, the more general social and political climate around migrants' rights in Tel Aviv seemed not to have changed very much at all, despite the resolution of the deportation debate for some illegalized

migrant women and their children.<sup>51</sup> Ironically, I celebrated Grace and Janet's new legal status with them and their children at a demonstration against the imminent deportation of another illegalized child, a six-year-old girl who had been slated for deportation among the original 1,200 but who had not been eligible for legal status because she was under the required age of five years by the August 2010 deadline.

On July 4, 2012, six-year-old A.J., who was born in Tel Aviv to two legally contracted FWP workers from the Philippines, was poised to be the next of 90 illegalized children who had been deported from Israel in the preceding year and a half (Guarnieri, 2012). When she was taken into detention two days after the school year ended, A.J. literally became the poster-child for efforts to block the deportation of children – approximately five hundred of the original 1,200 – who remained in Israel and still were without legal status. This new leg of the anti-deportation campaign referred specifically to the ongoing nature of Tel Aviv's deportation regime and to the so-called revolving door through which migrant recruitment agencies recruited new migrants while the Israeli government deported those migrants who were already in the country. It thus focussed on an established, but previously marginal critique of Israel's deportation regime, namely, that the enormous profit that migrant recruitment agencies and their contacts in the Israeli

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<sup>51</sup> By July 2012, it was reported that of the 701 applications for permanent residency for Israeli-born children of illegalized migrants that were received by the Ministry of Interior, 183 of these requests had been immediately rejected on the grounds that the children did not meet the criteria, and 257 had led to the granting of legal status to children and their mothers. Nearly two years after the deadline had passed, 261 children had cases that were still pending or in process (Guarnieri, 2010a). Additionally, of the original 1,200 children slated for deportation, the 499 who had not put in applications at all continued to live as illegalized residents of Tel Aviv.

government and the Israeli economy in general were making from recruitment agency fees,<sup>52</sup> was preventing the creation of a viable, long-term policy for non-Jewish migration to Israel. In other words, the Israeli government was intentionally perpetuating the permanent temporariness of migrant workers and the open-endedness of the deportation debate.



Image I: Demonstration against the deportation of A.J. 2012 - Tel Aviv, Israel  
Caption – “Minister of Education Mr. Gideon Sa’ar, my name is A.J. and I’m also one of your students. The door [of labour recruitment and deportation] continues to revolve, the manpower agencies continue to get rich. Four hundred innocent children are paying the price.”

<sup>52</sup> While, as of March 2012, Israeli law permitted agencies to charge only 3,479 NIS (approximately 900 USD) as a recruitment fee for providing migrants with legal visas and employers, studies have corroborated anecdotal evidence that migrants pay much higher sums. Fees varied according to the agency, the labour sector, and the country from which migrants were recruited, but ranged from approximately 5,000 USD for caregivers from the Philippines to up to 32,000 USD for construction workers from China (Raijman and Kushnirovich, 2012:83-85).

Indeed, in 2012, the Israeli government seemed no closer to an immigration policy that would include non-Jewish migrant workers than it was two-and-a-half years earlier when the deportation debate began. Migrant women continued to become pregnant and give birth in Israel, and while the baby or visa regulation was no longer in effect, hundreds of women who had already become illegalized as a result of baby or visa remained in Tel Aviv without legal status for themselves or for their children.

Lupe, Estella and Alejandra were all still living as illegalized residents of Tel Aviv in July, 2012. Alejandra was the only one of the three who had managed to secure status for her son – although not for herself – by obtaining documentation that proved that Diego had a Jewish father who recognized him officially. Each of the women continued to care for their children and to engage actively with community groups, welfare and migrant service centres and with religious and educational institutions throughout Tel Aviv. While they were always aware of the threat of deportation, and ever wary of making future plans, they lived fully and energetically in the present, doing what they could to provide for their children and for themselves.

### **Summary of findings**

I began this thesis by asking what happened when migrant women, who were employed through the Foreign Worker Program to do various forms of domestic and reproductive labour for Israeli citizens, chose to build their own homes and families in Tel Aviv between 2009 and 2011. I was especially curious about the ways in which these women and their Israeli-born children were socially, economically and politically situated



in a society in which they were never supposed to settle or to be born. Over the course of 13 months of fieldwork, I discovered that the enduring yet uncertain presence of these women and their children in Tel Aviv, the contested nature of which was highlighted by the deportation debate of 2009, was exemplary of a broader set of paradoxical processes that characterized the lives of illegalized residents. I have called this set of processes the politics of intimacy and I have defined these politics as the building blocks of an interdependent relationship between illegalized migrant women and the structures and ideologies of Israeli society. Specifically, Israeli state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic/administrative practices and socio-cultural expectations have shaped the decisions that illegalized migrant women have made about how to conduct their everyday lives. At the same time, the decisions and strategies of these women have proliferated, accumulated and developed into social relationships, patterned ways of interacting and socio-political organizations that speak back to such policies, laws, practices and social expectations in ways that have challenged and partially altered them over time.

To elaborate on these processes and to further explore the politics of intimacy, I have organized this thesis into chapters that mirror my understanding of intimacy as a socio-political condition that contains within it the potential for apparently contradictory experiences of tension and tenderness, acceptance and rejection, safety and danger, opportunity and exploitation. That is, each chapter is named for a paradox, an intimate condition of migrant life that, while made up of features that are seemingly opposed to one another, are, in fact, internally coherent.

In Part I of this thesis, I provided the ethnographic and analytical background upon which the rest of the thesis was built. Chapter One described how the context within which the Foreign Worker Program was established provided the setting for migrants to become *Proximate Foreigners* whose integration into Tel Aviv society occurred in uneven and unexpected ways. Specifically, as non-Palestinian but also non-Jewish residents of Israel's largest city, migrant caregivers in particular entered into Tel Aviv's urban landscape as a new kind of Other, simultaneously more accepted into Israeli society than the Palestinian workers whom they replaced, while still much more socially and politically disenfranchised than the Jewish citizens among whom they lived.

In Chapter Two, I outlined an analytical framework for the thesis and presented my definition of the politics of intimacy. I used the literatures on the feminization of migration, migrant motherhood, the lives of illegalized migrants and the anthropology of intimacy to introduce how the concept of a politics of intimacy addresses emerging empirical trends and analytical quandaries in the field of migration. I described how what I have called migrant mothers – that is, migrant women who become mothers in the country to which they migrate – are generally portrayed in the welfare states to which they migrate as both the most vulnerable and the most threatening of all migrants. It therefore has become important to explore and explain the unique and seemingly contradictory roles that they play in reconfiguring the politics of these so-called receiving societies. An understanding of the mutual articulation of politics and intimacy on the one hand, and the complex quality of intimacy as a form of closeness that encompasses a range of relational possibilities, on the other hand, gives rise to a definition of intimacy as

a socio-political condition that characterizes the engagement between migrant mothers and the structures and ideologies of the places in which they live.

Part II is divided into chapters which describe intimate conditions that have emerged through, and as a result of, the politics of intimacy. I have shown how each of these conditions, like intimacy itself, is made up of features that are seemingly opposed to one another but are, in fact, mutually constitutive. While they at first appear as though they are contradictions, these intimate conditions are, in fact, paradoxes in that they are internally coherent. In Chapter Three, on *Permanent Temporariness*, I explained a foundational element of illegalized migrant settlement in Tel Aviv: how an ideal of temporariness in the FWP and beyond, typified by the implementation of the baby or visa regulation and the monitoring of migrant women's sexual and reproductive lives, has led to these women living in heightened states of deportability and of precariousness in the workforce, particularly in 2009 as a deportation debate entered the public realm. However, migrant women's decisions and strategies regarding relationships, birth, child-rearing and anti-deportation activism have also made them more adept than their male counterparts at imagining and implementing their own permanence. As legalized and illegalized migrant women in Tel Aviv have been subjected to, and have occasionally managed to alter, the contradictory policies and practices of Israeli government and society, they have settled into a state of living in which their permanence and temporariness are mutually dependent features of the same intimate social condition.

In Chapter Four, on the condition of *Visible Invisibility*, I further described the politics of intimacy according to which illegalized migrant women live, focussing on the

ways in which these women have become simultaneously visible and invisible in administrative and cultural realms. I traced migrant women's interactions in Tel Aviv's medical clinics and hospitals as well as their participation in public performances and in the local and national popular media, in order to outline their uneven experiences of physical (in)visibility, bureaucratic (in)visibility and political (in)visibility. I found that illegalized migrant women who were pregnant and/or had Israeli-born children were able to make themselves hyper-visible in some contexts in ways that allowed them to achieve immediate and long-term goals. I also found that these forms of visibility were always racialized and gendered, however, often framed and perpetuated by the goals of Israeli citizens with whom migrant women engaged, and thus out of migrant women's direct control.

In Chapter Five, I described the condition of *Inclusive Exclusion*, explaining ways in which familializing is a social practice that has not simply described but has also created relations within domestic places, in the law, on the street, in schools and in the political mobilization of both pro and anti-deportation activists. I showed how illegalized women and their children engaged with Israeli bureaucratic, administrative and cultural institutions as well as with individual Israeli citizens on matters of constructing family and belonging, sometimes employing strategies to create familial arrangements or forms of inclusion that served their interests, and other times becoming the object of Israelis' strategic and selective familializing and the related processes of exclusion. Inclusion and exclusion thus emerged as mutually constitutive processes through which illegalized migrant women and their children participated in the socio-cultural fields of the nuclear

and extended family, on the one hand, and the cultural ideal of a national family, on the other.

In Part III of this thesis, I have addressed some outcomes of the politics of intimacy, exploring further the impacts that conditions of intimacy have had on illegalized migrant women, their children and the Israeli citizens with whom they regularly interacted. In Chapter Six, I described ways in which illegalized migrant women became a *Privileged Underclass* vis-à-vis other socio-economic classes and ethnic groups in Tel Aviv. I highlighted how migrants' interactions with wealthy, educated and politically enfranchised *Ashkenazi* Jews from Tel Aviv's White City have raised suspicion and contempt among migrants' poor and marginalized *Mizrahi* neighbours in Tel Aviv's "Black City", thereby suggesting that the pro-deportation campaign must be understood as having emerged out of long-standing tensions within Tel Aviv. I showed how the politics of intimacy have become deeply embedded in the local social and political context, drawing from prior conflicts in Tel Aviv and likely contributing to future divisions among members of this city and of the country as a whole.

It is in light of the continuing impact that migrants, the politics of intimacy and conditions of intimacy have had on the socio-political landscape of both Tel Aviv and Israel, that I have called this concluding chapter *Open Endings* and offered an epilogue that remains unfinished and inconclusive. Further ethnographic research in this area would document and analyse empirical changes in the experiences of illegalized migrant mothers and their children in Tel Aviv who have become legalized as a result of the deportation debate. How has the change in legal status affected the everyday lives of

these women and their children, including their interactions with the various state and government policies, laws, bureaucratic and administrative practices and socio-cultural expectations that have been described in this thesis? This question requires an investigation of the long-term effects of “residency status” on the childrens’ participation in Israeli institutions such as school, the Israeli Scouts and the Army (IDF). It must also include an exploration of the ways in which now-legalized migrant women and their children experience new or enduring forms of gendered racialization, so prominent during 2009-2011, within these institutions. Additionally, further research would address what happens to those who have not become legalized. If illegalized women are deported from Israel, as some already have been as of the writing of this thesis, how do they proceed with their lives “back home” in towns and cities that are foreign to their children and perhaps changed beyond their own recognition? If they remain in Israel, how do the conditions of their illegality change now that they, and their communities are more visible and more visibly illegalized?

Shifting the lense away from migrant women and their children, future research may also address changes in Tel Aviv and Israeli society, and among Israeli citizens in particular, that have come about as a result of the surge of interest in migrants’ rights that accompanied the deportation debate. For example, what structures and ideologies have emerged out of, and as a result of, the deportation debate and how do they continue to operate in Tel Aviv society considering the ever-shifting political landscape around issues of migration? Specifically, how are activist and advocacy groups that developed or were strengthened during 2009-2011 redefining their goals and methods according to changing

public concerns and new trends in migration – most prominently, the heightened interest among Tel Aviv residents in asylum seekers who have migrated to Israel from Eritrea and Sudan and the related issues of homelessness and poverty that have accompanied this migration flow? Considering new developments in non-Jewish migration to Tel Aviv and Israel, how have citizens and the mainstream media oriented and reoriented themselves around which issues and which migrants should be supported or rejected? How have established political parties similarly drawn lines around the increasingly multi-faceted issue of migration policy? And how have all of these changes modified or reinforced different tropes of nationalism and ideals of belonging so well-established in this context?

Finally, new ethnographic research on the politics of intimacy should expand upon the investigation of intimacy as a set of socio-political conditions, describing how these conditions develop cross-culturally and over time. What are the ways in which societies with a range of legal, religious and political systems, as well as historic and geographic formulations, generate intimate, interdependent relationships between individuals and the state? Which branches of the state are most significant in creating this intimacy, and who are the individuals who are most engaged in these processes? Empirical examples will contribute to analyses and theoretical inquiries into the complex quality of intimacy, the dualistic and seemingly contradictory nature of which is its only predictable feature.

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