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To cite this article: Rachel M. Gisselquist (2020): Involuntary migration, inequality, and integration: national and subnational influences, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2020.1724409](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1724409)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1724409>



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Published online: 12 Sep 2020.



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Involuntary migration, inequality, and integration: national and subnational influences

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Migration is an inherent feature of human history. A rich literature considers the experiences of global migrants across diverse environments. This article, and the special issue of which it is a part, explores such experiences with a focus on inequality between migrants and host populations in countries of settlement.¹ It asks: why are economic inequalities between these populations deeper and more persistent in some situations than others? How has ‘integration’ in this sense varied across groups and contexts and over time? What factors contribute to such variation? What policies and programmes facilitate better and more equitable economic outcomes for migrants? We approach these questions through focused and comparative study of two migrant populations (Vietnamese and Afghan) in four Western countries (Canada, Germany, the U.K., and the U.S.). We pay particular attention to involuntary migrants, who fled conflict in their home regions beginning in the 1970s–1980s.

Each of the chapters in this special issue considers one such group-country case and is designed as both a stand-alone analysis of this case and a component of our broader comparative project. Each chapter thus has been tasked with (1) describing variation in economic outcomes between migrants and non-migrants over time and across space, drawing on analysis of primary and secondary sources and (2) presenting an analytical argument about the factors contributing to such (subnational) variation. These analyses are diverse, theoretically and methodologically; one contribution of this collection is in bringing together such varied perspectives on our core questions. At the same time, as a component of a broader comparative project, each chapter has responded – in different ways – to a core set of questions and theoretically-grounded concepts. This introduction frames the collection within the broader literature, presents conceptual and theoretical underpinnings for the overall project, reviews the chapters, and considers key findings that emerge from a collective reading. This discussion does not aim at ‘testing’ hypotheses, but at contributing to hypothesis building and the identification of promising directions for future research.

This introduction makes four interrelated points. First, understanding inequality between migrant and non-migrant groups in countries of settlement – including variation across and within countries and over time – is an important area for continuing research. One fruitful approach – developed in this article – draws linkages between work in economics and political science on ‘horizontal’ inequality and work in sociology on segmented

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assimilation. Second, a segmented assimilation approach in particular suggests that over decades and generations, we should expect multiple inequality ‘outcomes’, ranging from migrant upward mobility, equality, and dissolution of boundaries between migrant and non-migrant groups, to deep and persistent inequality between groups (see Zhou 1997). Third, a variety of factors influence which situation results. Some of these pertain to the ‘context of reception’ – (1) governmental policies and institutions; (2) labour markets; and (3) pre-existing co-ethnic communities (Portes and Borocz 1989; Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997). Others relate to the groups themselves – in particular, their (4) human capital and socioeconomic characteristics and (5) social cohesion or ‘groupness’. Fourth, the chapters in this collection provide illustration of all five sets of factors, but several points stand out in a collective reading. These are the substantial influence of governance policies and practices, both migration policy specifically as well as general social policies; labour market vulnerability and discrimination; the labour market role of ‘co-ethnic’ communities beyond national origin; and migrant group cohesion and within-group diversity.

Horizontal inequality, integration, and influences

The concept of ‘integration’, which is used throughout this collection, requires some consideration at the outset. Integration refers here to ‘the process of settlement of newcomers in a given society, to the interaction of these newcomers with the host society, and to the social change that follows immigration’ (Penninx 2019). Ager and Strang (2008) offer a useful conceptual framework identifying four core ‘markers and means’ of integration: employment, education, housing, and health. In this collection, we focus on integration in economic terms, with particular attention to the first two of these markers.

Integration is a central concept in migration studies but also a strongly disputed one. Classical notions of integration are criticised for suggesting fixed boundaries between immigrants and non-immigrants that have essentializing connotations, as well as for the normative underpinnings of the term (Rytter 2018; Schinkel 2018) and the discursive implications of its use (Korteweg 2017). Critiques raise important concerns even about the study of integration.

The approach adopted here addresses such critiques in several ways. First, we aim to study integration as a ‘two-way’ relational process in which both migrants and the receiving society change integration; it need not be conceived as a ‘one way’ process of change by migrants only (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore 2018; Klarenbeek 2019; Penninx 2019). Second, we note the substantive distinction between integration as a process to be studied (as it is here), and integration as a normative policy objective (Penninx 2019). Moreover, while the term nevertheless can be criticised for spotlighting troubling us/them dichotomies, Klarenbeek (2019) notes, ‘social boundaries between “legitimate members” and “non-legitimate members” are a political and social reality and not using the term would not change the relational inequality and other injustices stemming from them’ (2). Such inequalities are important to better understand and thus to study.

In considering economic integration and inequality, this collection brings into conversation several literatures. The first, largely from economics and political science, deals with ‘horizontal’ inequality, or inequality between ‘culturally defined’ groups ‘in economic, social or political dimensions or cultural status’ – as opposed to ‘vertical’ inequality

between individuals or households (Stewart 2008, 3). Horizontal inequalities are diverse and multilayered; they are studied for instance among African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, 'white' Americans, and others in the U.S.; Hindus and Muslims in India; indigenous and non-indigenous populations in many parts of the Americas; and immigrants and 'native' populations around the world. This collection focuses on horizontal inequality between immigrants (including first generation migrants and their descendants) and the rest of the population, with particular attention to the economic dimension.

Horizontal inequality matters because it is unjust. It also matters because of its possible negative implications, including for peace and economic growth (e.g. Stewart 2008; United Nations & World Bank 2018). The literature on horizontal inequality has paid particular attention to its implications, but leaves considerable gaps in theorising its roots. Work in the latter area has paid particular attention to the factors and processes influencing long-ago origins – e.g. geography, colonialism and conquest, and historical institutions – and to understanding the persistence of inequalities thus constituted, over decades and centuries (Canelas and Gisselquist 2018). Among the sources of more contemporary change in horizontal inequality, international migration stands out as possibly 'the biggest source of new horizontal inequalities' (Stewart 2016, 12). Yet, its impact remains undertheorized in this literature. While we know that new immigrants are often economically disadvantaged in comparison to majority populations, what to expect in terms of horizontal inequality as they settle over years and generations is less clear.

Exploring the multiple pathways that immigrant integration takes is precisely the focus of a second body of work drawn on in this article – largely from sociology. Classical assimilation theory, for one, implies a linear path of integration, such that inequality between migrant and majority populations lessens over time, with the eventual dissolution of group boundaries (e.g. Gordon 1964; Warner and Srole 1945). In contrast, segmented assimilation theory suggests a non-linear process and a more diverse set of outcomes (e.g. Portes and Rumbaut 1990; Portes and Zhou 1993). It posits three main patterns of labour market integration: primary labour market integration into professional and technical jobs; integration into immigrant or ethnic enclaves; and secondary labour market integration into low skilled jobs (Portes 1981). These patterns in turn correspond with upward mobility, parallel integration, and downward mobility for migrants as compared to non-migrants (Zhou 1997).

Considering then implications for horizontal inequality: the first pattern, like classic assimilation theory, suggests an over-time shift towards horizontal equality, including a possible dissolution of boundaries between migrant and non-migrant 'groups'. The second implies economically-salient and persistent distinctions between migrants and non-migrants, sometimes alongside low or declining levels of horizontal inequality. And the third points to significant and persistent horizontal inequality between these groups.

Although a considerable body of work documents the existence of such diverse patterns of integration, it still may be that the first – consistent with classical assimilation theory – is the norm. Alba and Nee (2003), in particular, argue that the trend towards assimilation holds in the U.S. for both historical and contemporary (post-1965) immigrants, with evidence of movement toward the mainstream in terms of economic outcomes, education, acculturation, language acquisition, and intermarriage. While both European and non-European immigrants show similar patterns, however, they also find significant and persistent impediments to assimilation linked to race. This may suggest that, regardless of

whether linear assimilation is the norm, a segmented assimilation approach is especially relevant for those physically identifiable as 'lower status' within existing ethno-racial hierarchies in host communities.

Context of reception

Segmented assimilation theory points to the interaction of individual characteristics and host community context of reception, but has placed particular emphasis on the latter. As Portes and MacLeod (1996) note, 'the context that receives immigrants plays a decisive role in their process of adaptation, regardless of the human capital the immigrants may possess' (25). Three aspects of this receiving environment are highlighted:

(1) *Government reception*: As Portes and Rumbaut (2006, 93) note, 'in every instance, governmental policy represents the first stage of the process of incorporation because it affects the probability of successful immigration and the framework of economic opportunities and legal options available to migrants once they arrive'. The legal status of migrants affects their access to various benefits and services, as well to the formal labour market. Migrants may be legally admitted temporarily or on a permanent basis. Those with refugee or asylum status also may qualify for resettlement assistance, such as housing, job training, or educational loans. Legal immigrants may be eligible for general welfare programmes (alongside citizens) – or eligibility may be limited in some way, such as through the imposition of a wait time before enrolment after legal permanent residence is established.

More broadly, then, social policies and government programmes benefitting the population as a whole also shape migrants' context of reception and might help us to understand variations in integration (see Castles et al. 2010). Likewise, other aspects of governmental reception may influence variation in migrant experiences across countries. For instance, migrants may participate in some government programmes not as migrants, but as ethnic minorities (e.g. affirmative action in education or public employment). Considerable sub-national variation in the receiving environment linked to local policies and practice is also clear (e.g. Jaworsky et al. 2012).

In addition, government policies with respect to citizenship are part of the receiving environment. Such policies can be linked more broadly to political culture, national identity, and models of diversity. For instance, Germany's 'ethnic' approach may be contrasted with 'civic' citizenship in Canada, the U.K., and the U.S., or Canada's active promotion of group rights with more hands-off approaches to multicultural citizenship elsewhere (Bloemraad 2007).

Finally, a variety of non-governmental institutions are involved in the governance of migrant affairs, such as organisations contracted to provide resettlement assistance. The discussion below thus considers governance reception by both governmental and nongovernmental institutions.

(2) *Labour market reception* refers to 'stage in the business cycle, demand for specific kinds of labour, and regional wage differentials', as well as the typification of a particular group in positive or negative terms, leading for instance to preferential hiring or discrimination in the labour market (Portes and Rumbaut 2006, 93–94). Likewise, the interaction of labour market conditions and the individual migrant characteristics influence economic

integration. Kogan (2006)'s analysis of 14 countries using European Labour Force Survey data, for instance, suggests lower employment disadvantages for unprivileged immigrants in countries with stronger demand for low-skilled labour and in liberal welfare states with more flexible labour markets.

Labour market discrimination towards immigrants also has important links with ethno-racial discrimination more generally. For instance, Villarreal and Tamborini (2018, 686) find in the U.S. that earnings assimilation is racially differentiated such that 'black and Hispanic immigrants are less able to catch up with native whites' earnings compared to white and Asian immigrants, but they are almost able to reach earnings parity with natives of their same race and ethnicity'.

The literature further suggests that discrimination faced by Muslim immigrants in the West (including Afghans) has been pronounced in comparison to other groups – in the labour market and beyond (see Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 2009; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018). In particular, after 2001 the 'war on terror' and the false association of Islam with terrorism has meant a uniquely negative and securitised context of reception for Muslims in the West (Cesari 2012). Anti-Muslim hostility also may have increased since the late 2000s, for instance in the U.S. during the Obama and Trump presidencies (Pew Research Center 2017; Stempel 2018).

(3) *Co-ethnic community reception* is the third core aspect of the receiving context. Immigrants commonly arrive into places where there is a pre-existing co-ethnic community, which can 'cushion the impact of cultural change and protect immigrants against outside prejudice and initial economic difficulties' (Portes and Rumbaut 2006, 95). In the case of some refugee groups, such as Southeast Asian refugees, such a co-ethnic community was non-existent upon arrival. Zhou and Bankston (1998), for instance, has provided such illustration of how the Vietnamese-origin population in the U.S. built their community and received support from it. Co-ethnic communities play multiple roles and have diverse impact on economic integration.

Although a segmented assimilation approach has been applied in multiple contexts, one critique is that its core theoretical framework is built largely on U.S. experience and that more attention to generalisability is needed. Relatedly, context of reception is often characterised by U.S. migrant nationality group, arguably without sufficient attention to specifying and measuring its three core aspects independently. This makes it difficult to disentangle the impact of contextual factors from group attributes, and to trace and test the channels through which these factors operate (see Catron 2016; Luthra, Soehl, and Waldinger 2018). The sort of comparisons spotlighted in this collection could help to tease out such issues.

Migrant group characteristics

Migrants and migrant groups themselves also of course influence integration processes. At the individual level, for instance, educational qualifications, work experience, language abilities, age, gender, and marital status may influence economic integration. While there is not space to consider all factors here, we briefly highlight two in relation to migrant groups. First, the literature points to the influence of collective or group average 'human capital' (Antonia Silles 2018; Aydemir 2014; Dustmann and Fabbri 2003). Not only do *levels* of education and work experience matter, but also whether

they were acquired ‘abroad’ or in the host country (Friedberg 2000; Zwysen 2018); the imperfect transferability of human capital helps to explain immigrant/non-immigrant wage differentials (Basilio, Bauer, and Kramer 2017). The impact of human capital is also integrated into work on segmented assimilation. Portes and Borocz (1989), for instance, offer predictions about labour market integration through the interaction of context of reception and the migrant group’s class of origin (‘manual labour’, ‘professional-technical’, or ‘entrepreneurial’).

A second set of factors relates to groupness and social cohesion. Neither migrants nor majority populations in countries of settlement constitute fully cohesive entities. Although both are often described as ‘groups’ – as they are, for simplicity, in this article – studies of identity and social groups underscore that such groups are by no means coherent, fixed, organised, or even necessarily central to group ‘members’ (see Brubaker 2004). Indeed, even though our focus in this collection is not on problematising groups, a constructivist approach to ethnic groups underlies the overall project (see Chandra 2012). Such an approach underscores that multiple social markers and identities, including race, religion, language, class, and gender, may all be relevant to the nominal members of national origin groups. Within-group inequalities also matter. Likewise, some national origin groups may be more cohesive than others, for instance with formal and active social, political, or economic organisations that bring together group members.

Involuntary migrants

This collection focuses on a particular subset of migrants – those forced to migrate due to conflict in their countries of origin, as opposed to ‘voluntarily’ for economic opportunity or other reasons. While it is not always possible to draw sharp distinctions, we focus on refugees, asylees and asylum seekers, and what the UNHCR labels ‘other persons of concern’. Selected chapters also explicitly consider both (in particular, see Bösch and Su 2020).

One reason for focusing our study in this way is that the factors outlined above may play out somewhat differently for voluntary as compared to involuntary migrants:

In terms of context of reception, work on segmented assimilation has found that refugees as a group have faced different – and sometimes more positive – reception than economic migrants, because refugee status has been accompanied by assistance and government benefits that economic migrants did not receive (Portes and Zhou 1993). It is worth noting that changes in international policies – as discussed further below – suggest that this may be shifting. In addition, in some instances, public awareness of the conflicts and humanitarian crises giving rise to involuntary migration has galvanised public support. That said, it is also clear that both voluntary and involuntary migrants have faced considerable hostility and discrimination in many contexts.

Involuntary migrants also may face other particular challenges. Conflict may entail not only the loss of material assets, but also physical and mental trauma that can have implications in the labour market (see Alemi et al. 2014). In addition, the fact of having less choice in the decision to migrate, and where, suggests that ‘fit’ and job market mismatch could be a comparatively larger problem (Dadush and Niebuhr 2016). Internal divisions and a lack of cohesion within the migrant group also may be sharper because conflicts that give rise to involuntary migration may be linked to deep socio-political divisions within countries.

Cases and comparisons in this collection

Beginning in the mid to late 1970s, tens of thousands of people left Indochina and Afghanistan in face of war and conflict. From 1975 and for the next two decades, this included more than 2 million people from Indochina, of which about 1.6 million were from Vietnam (Miller 2015).² While early strategy in the Indochinese crisis aimed to resettle refugees outside the region in order to reduce pressure on countries of first asylum, this changed over time; the Indochinese crisis thus marks a shift in Western refugee policy away from massive refugee resettlement and ‘open-ended commitments to resettlement as a durable solution’ (UNHCR 2000, 103). This shift is evident in the Afghan experience. The first wave of emigration from Afghanistan followed the Soviet invasion in 1979. In the 1980s at the height of the war, about 3.5 million Afghan refugees were in Pakistan, 2 million in Iran, and thousands elsewhere (Rubin 1996). Although many returned to Afghanistan after the Soviet departure, emigration continued at high levels in the 1990s and 2000s. In 1990, the refugee population reached 6.22 million, or about 40% of the Afghan population (Long 2009, 16). A third wave of Afghan migration began in 2001, linked to the war between the Taliban and U.S.-led coalition forces (see Marchand et al. 2014, 32). The vast majority have been hosted by neighbouring countries, although settlement in Western countries increased in the 2000s as shown below.

The group-country cases considered in this collection were chosen as particularly instructive for theory building for several reasons (see Gisselquist 2014). For one, these were some of the largest refugee flows in contemporary history, with displacement into multiple countries and the possibility of considering integration processes over multiple years and at least one generation. In addition, the selected countries are among the Western countries that have hosted the highest numbers of refugees, including from Vietnam and Afghanistan. Collectively, they also provide the opportunity to consider immigrant integration across countries with a range of models of immigrant incorporation, diversity, and citizenship.

In terms of Vietnamese involuntary migrants, the U.S. resettled the highest numbers of refugees by far: according to the UNHCR (2000, 99), between 1975 and 1995, this was 424,590 *not* including arrivals under the Orderly Departure Programme (ODP, discussed further below). The U.S. was followed by Australia (110,996), Canada (103,053), France (27,071), the U.K. (19,355), and the Federal Republic of Germany (16,848). The studies in this collection provide further detail on numbers and trends. In the U.S., for instance, Bankston and Zhou (2020) report that 125,000 refugees from Vietnam were authorised entry in April 1975. A further 95,200 refugees arrived in 1980 and several tens of thousands per year throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. By 1989, 165,000 had arrived under the ODP programme. By 2015, there were almost 2 million American citizens and residents of Vietnamese descent. In Canada, Hou (2020) notes the arrival of 7,700 refugees in 1975–1978. By 1981, the Vietnamese population in Canada was roughly 40,000. In the U.K., Barber (2020) reports the first arrivals of ‘quota’ refugees in 1979 and by the early 1990s, about 24,000 refugees accepted for resettlement. In 2006, the population of Vietnamese descent in Britain (including voluntary and involuntary migrants and descendants) was roughly 55,000–65,000 (IOM 2006, as cited in Barber (2020)). In Germany, Bösch and Su (2020) note that 35,000 refugees arrived in West Germany starting in 1979 (and about 70,000 Vietnamese contract workers in East Germany starting in 1980). About 45,000 contract workers,

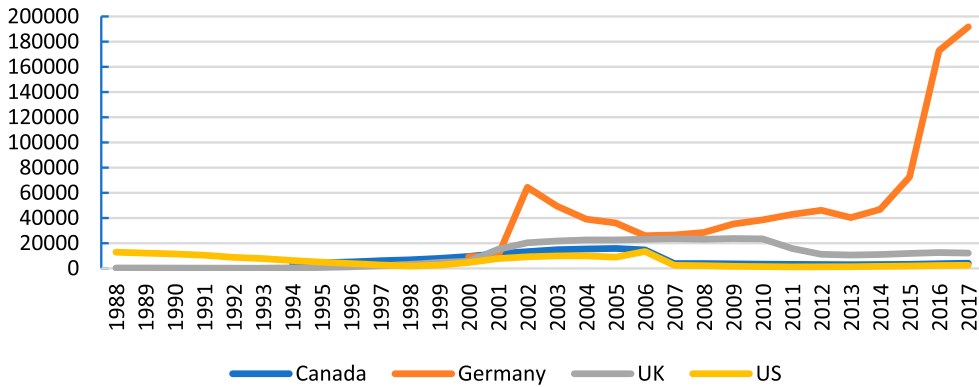


Figure 1. Afghan ‘persons of concern’ by host country (absolute numbers).

Source: UNHCR.

relatives, and refugees and asylum seekers arrived in the first half of the 1990s, and 25,000 returned to Vietnam. In 2016, the population of Vietnamese descent was about 176,000, of which two-thirds were foreign-born.

For Afghan involuntary migrants, the UNHCR Statistical Yearbook provides a picture of total numbers of Afghan refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless, and others of concern in our four host countries from 1988, the earliest year available.³ As [Figure 1](#) suggests, the U.S. accepted higher numbers of Afghan involuntary migrants than the other three countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but was surpassed by them thereafter, and since 2002, Germany has hosted the highest numbers by far. These figures do not include, for instance, second generation migrants and voluntary migrants, so the total Afghan-origin population in each country may be significantly higher.

In considering these figures, a key point to highlight is that – even though the first waves of involuntary international migration from both countries were only a few years apart – the majority of involuntary migrants from Afghanistan arrived in our countries of focus several decades after those from Vietnam. Although the U.S. notably received significant numbers of Afghans in the 1980s, there was an upturn in arrivals in all four countries from about 2000. Especially in Canada, Germany, and the U.K., therefore, Vietnamese involuntary migrants had almost a generation head start over Afghan involuntary migrants in resettlement – which is important to remember in cross-group comparisons.

Articles in this collection

In addition to this framing article, this collection includes seven studies. The only group-country case not included is Afghans in Germany, on which other research is considered (e.g. [Fischer 2017](#); [Zulfacar 1998](#)).

The special issue begins with the Vietnamese cases: [Bankston and Zhou \(2020\)](#), whose book *Growing Up American* ([Zhou and Bankston 1998](#)) is a classic on the U.S. experience, extend their previous work to analyse socioeconomic mobility among Vietnamese refugees and how it has been shaped by policies, institutions, and patterns of social relations, as well as individual agency. Beginning with discussion of nationwide patterns and trends from

1980 to 2015, they then consider the comparative experiences of two Vietnamese communities – in New Orleans and Biloxi.

Focusing on Canada, Hou (2020) analyses multi-year census data to characterise over three decades the economic outcomes of Vietnamese refugees who arrived in 1979/1980, with comparison to other immigrants and the Canadian-born population. Using multiple regression models, he also points to the regional contexts shaping economic outcomes, including the influence of regional ethnic concentration and labour market conditions, alongside individual and human capital factors, such as age, marital status, education, and language ability.

Barber (2020) considers Vietnamese in the U.K., with focus on experiences across London, where over half of the U.K. Vietnamese population lives, scattered across boroughs in seven community ‘hubs’. Drawing on qualitative data, including in-depth interviews, she shows how the heterogeneity of this population, along with resettlement policies, have contributed to ‘differentiated embedding’ (Ryan 2018) and divergent integration patterns.

Bösch and Su (2020) exploit Germany’s political history to consider the comparative experiences of Vietnamese refugees to West Germany and Vietnamese contract workers to East Germany, who arrived from 1979 and 1980 respectively. Using mixed qualitative methods, and with particular attention to Berlin as compared to other regions of Germany, they explore the influence of varied contexts of reception alongside diversity of migrant backgrounds. While contract workers were disadvantaged by a more negative government reception, they suggest, this may be offset over time by the positive influence of ethnic networks.

The three Afghan cases build upon a more limited body of published research, due at least in part to the later arrival of this population in most of the countries of study. Even sketching national patterns and trends thus involved new analysis in these studies in particular:

In the U.S., Stempel and Alemi (2020) analyse data from the 2006–2015 American Community Survey (ACS) and the census to fill significant gaps in the literature on Afghan refugees, which has focused much more on mental health issues than on economic integration. They provide new insight into the comparative experiences of first wave Afghan refugees (arriving between 1980 and 1990) and analyse refugee and immigrant group effects on earned income. Compared to immigrant comparison groups, they find Afghan refugees’ earned incomes among the lowest and their analysis points to several key explanatory factors, including lower employment levels and discrimination in the labour market.

For Canada, Pendakur (2020) draws on census and other data to provide new analysis of labour force and housing tenure outcomes for Afghans as compared to all immigrants, for differing immigrant intake categories and population groups. Controlling for various individual factors (including time in Canada) and region, analysis shows poor labour force outcomes among Afghan immigrants as compared to other immigrants, but upward mobility for their children. Notably, daughters of Afghan immigrants have both better employment probabilities and earnings than other immigrant women, and several explanations are considered.

Gladwell (2020) consider the experience of Afghan involuntary migrants in the U.K. through a focus on Afghan youth, in particular unaccompanied asylum seeking children, an especially vulnerable group (see Allsopp and Chase 2019). Carried out by researchers from the Refugee Support Network, a London-based NGO, this article provides an

example of practice-based research. It draws on in-depth interviews and focus groups in three regions, as well as data compiled from Freedom of Information requests to all local authorities in England. It documents the important role of educational achievement in socioeconomic opportunities and the challenges posed by unresolved immigration status.

Selected comparisons and observations

The studies in this collection illustrate that by the mid-2010s, the integration pattern of Vietnamese involuntary migrants was overall a story of success and upward socioeconomic mobility, both in comparison to other migrant groups and to non-migrant host country populations – if less so in the U.K. than in the other three countries of focus. In the U.S., for instance, Bankston and Zhou (2020, 12) report that while the median household income of the Vietnamese origin population was 90% that of the U.S. average in 1980, by 2015 it surpassed it by 25% (\$72,000 compared to \$58,000 in 2017 dollars). In Canada, Hou (2020, 18) calculates that, despite their parents' generally low levels of education, childhood refugees (aged 30–47) by 2011 held university degrees at a rate surpassing that of other childhood immigrants (36 compared to 32%) and the Canadian-born population (26%). In Germany, Bösch and Su (2020, 18) note that over half of the children of Vietnamese citizens attend the prestigious *Gymnasium* (at 12–13 years), more than any other national group. In the U.K., Barber (2020, 6) notes that mapping the mobility of the Vietnamese descent population is complicated by a lack of ethnic monitoring for the second generation, but points to likely upward intergenerational mobility given available information on educational outcomes.

Distinct ethnic economic niches also have persisted, the most well-known across countries being the nail care industry (Eckstein and Nguyen 2011). The U.K. seems to be at one end of the spectrum; in the early 2000s, over half of all Vietnamese businesses in London were in the nail industry (Bagwell 2006; Barber 2020). Elsewhere, there is a clearer trend towards fuller economic integration. In the U.S., in particular, Bankston and Zhou (2020) describe a 'mixed-niche strategy', including participation in a wider range of industries than other migrant groups, for instance in Louisiana shifting in the 1980s from manufacturing into fishing and food-related industries (9). Between 1980 and 2015, furthermore, the share of individuals of Vietnamese descent in managerial and professional occupations rose from 12.6% to 26.1%, suggesting increasing primary labour market integration. In terms of the three broad integration patterns reviewed in Section 2, therefore, the Vietnamese experience seems to fall somewhere between the first and second patterns overall – with lessening horizontal inequality, alongside some persistence of ethnic niches.

The experience of Afghan involuntary migrants seems to contrast. While differences in socioeconomic status between Afghan and Vietnamese migrants today would not be surprising given the more recent arrival of Afghans in numbers, available data suggest that integration patterns have differed even at comparable points in time after migration. In Canada, Pendakur (2020) finds that immigrants born in Afghanistan have lower employment probabilities and earn substantially less than other immigrants, controlling for a number of factors including years in Canada. Moreover, those who entered Canada as refugees earn less than 'independent class' immigrants. Afghans born in Canada, however, have better earnings outcomes than those born in Afghanistan and compare

favourably with other immigrants, suggesting intergenerational mobility and some relative improvement in integration patterns in the second generation (13).

The U.S. data also allow for consideration of comparative experiences across involuntary migrant groups. Stempel and Alemi (2020)'s analysis suggests in 1990, mean earned income for Afghans at about 52% of the non-Afghan average, while by 2006–2015, it exceeded it by about 9%. However, this had a lot to do with Afghans living in high cost areas; controlling for local cost of living, first wave Afghan refugees in fact appear to do worse than others in their communities in terms of income and poverty status (12).

Ethnic niche economies also do not stand out in the same manner for Afghan involuntary migrants in our studies. Stempel and Alemi (2020) in particular report for the U.S. that 'the strongest economic niche among Afghans is the 13% of working age Afghan males in Virginia (4% in New York, 5% in California) were employed as taxi-drivers/chauffeurs' (16). Nevertheless, ethnic networks do play a role in the labour market. Gladwell (2020), for instance, report that Afghan care leavers with low skills tend to find employment in market stalls and shops owned by other Afghans or Pakistanis (4.3.2). In short, the pattern of labour market integration, across countries, suggests deeper and more persistent horizontal inequality, despite intergenerational mobility, and the possibly weaker emergence of ethnic niche economies – in other words, in terms of the three broad integration patterns reviewed in Section 2, the second or third patterns.

In considering the factors contributing to such divergent patterns of integration, elements of all five sets of factors outlined in Section 2 can be seen in the studies in this collection. While there is not space here to review each of these factors in turn, the discussion below highlights several key points that emerge from a comparative reading of the cases:

The substantial influence of governance policies and practices

In considering the divergent experiences of Vietnamese and Afghan involuntary migrants, the role of international policy stands out. In particular, for many Vietnamese involuntary migrants, resettlement was coordinated under the ODP, created in 1979 under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and operating until the late 1990s. Under the ODP, the Vietnamese government agreed to facilitate 'orderly departure', Southeast Asian countries to provide temporary asylum, and Western countries to accelerate resettlement. International coordination with regard to Afghan refugees offers clear contrast: under the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, a quadripartite agreement between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan (the two main countries hosting Afghan refugees), arrangement was for return to the country of origin and temporary protection in the host country (UNHCR 2012).

Divergent experiences across groups, countries, and time also are linked to variation in national policies and politics. In the U.K., where the first arrival of 'quota' refugees was only in 1979, its multicultural model, focused on groups from the Commonwealth, is important to highlight (see Barber 2020). Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher also voiced strong opposition to acceptance of Vietnamese refugees, noting that there 'would be riots in the streets if the government had to put refugees into council houses' (Travis 2009). In the U.S., which was deeply involved in the Vietnam war, doors opened relatively early, with the authorisation for entry of 125,000 Vietnamese refugees in 1975 (see Bankston and Zhou 2020). In addition to the ODP, domestic legislation such as

the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1988 and the Humanitarian Operation Program of 1989, facilitated the entry of children of American servicemen and former political detainees, respectively.

Although American military involvement in Afghanistan has drawn comparisons to Vietnam, government policy and practice with respect to the hosting and resettlement of Afghan refugees is comparatively unfavourable. In simple numbers alone, far more Vietnamese refugees were accepted and resettled in the U.S. than Afghan refugees. For instance, in fiscal year 2001 – the year that the third wave of out-migration from Afghanistan began – the State Department’s target of resettlement places for Afghan refugees from Pakistan and other countries was 4,000 (Hetfield 2001). As Gladwell (2020) illustrate poignantly, immigration status has far-reaching effects on lived experience and socio-economic outcomes for Afghan migrants in the U.K., including entry into the formal labour market – and the protections that it provides in terms of minimum wages and working conditions – as well as in terms of access to education and other public benefits.

Policy and practice with respect to pre-settlement and resettlement also are notable, including at subnational levels. Bankston and Zhou (2020), for instance, point to the crucial influence of the leadership of a local NGO, the Associated Catholic Charities’ Resettlement and Immigration Services in New Orleans, in facilitating and supporting the integration of the Vietnamese refugee community, which ran in opposite direction of the general U.S. refugee resettlement policy in dispersing refugees. Based on such experiences, Bankston and Zhou (2020) recommend concentrated resettlement as a way of supporting new arrivals ‘to build and rebuild their own social networks’ (19). The U.K., for one, adopted an opposite policy of (geographic) dispersal for Vietnamese refugees.

The role of voluntary and private agencies is further spotlighted, for instance, in Hou (2020)’s discussion of the Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Programme, which supports resettlement via private or joint private-public sponsorship. Over 200,000 privately sponsored refugees have arrived in Canada since 1978 (Hyndman, Payne, and Jimenez 2017).

Finally, beyond migrant-focused policy, Bösch and Su (2020)’s analysis in particular points to the role of the welfare state and universal education in promoting social mobility and thus integration, for both involuntary and voluntary migrants. Further research is needed into the relationship between the welfare state and migrant intergenerational mobility (see Kesler 2014). For instance, Esping-Andersen (1990)’s classification leads us to expect some contrast between Germany (a ‘conservative-corporatist’ welfare state) and Canada, the U.K., and the U.S. (liberal welfare states), while other work points to important variation among liberal welfare regimes (Myles 1998; Olsen 1994). Variation along these lines is not obvious in the studies in this collection but calls for more focused examination.

Labour market vulnerability and discrimination

Economic recession in the 1970s and early 1980s in all four countries, with high inflation and underemployment, suggests broadly challenging labour market reception during this period (Moy 1985). Within countries, variation in economic conditions also played a role in differential economic outcomes. For instance, Hou (2020) points to the influence of regional labour market conditions, among other factors, in the employment rates of Vietnamese refugees in Montreal (lower) as compared to Toronto and Vancouver (higher).

Bösch and Su (2020) discuss links between economic conditions and discrimination, finding that while reunification did not ‘significantly disrupt the lives of Germans in the West, it impacted the [Vietnamese] contract workers with real force’ as the ‘increasing unemployment rate and cost of living ... was accompanied by a new wave of nationalism’, including racist violence in the early 1990s.

Stempel and Alemi (2020) in particular spotlight discrimination, positing that it underlies unexplained negative effects in their models of being an Afghan refugee. This would be consistent with the work noted above on anti-Muslim hostility in the West. As they notes, the influence of discrimination on the integration of Afghan refugees cannot be explored directly in their analysis given that their data lack direct measures of discrimination, but this is an important topic for further study.

‘Co-ethnic’ communities beyond national origin and their role in the labour market

When Afghan and Vietnamese involuntary migrants began arriving in numbers, existing co-ethnic communities in all four countries were generally small, thus playing a limited role for first wave migrants. First wave migrants, in turn, formed co-ethnic communities of national origin that shaped the receiving environment for later migrants. Indeed, secondary migration within countries is clearly related to the presence of co-ethnic communities in specific locations (in particular, see Bankston and Zhou 2020; Barber 2020; Stempel and Alemi 2020).

The studies in this collection further illustrate how co-ethnic communities *beyond national origin* play a role in labour market integration. Hou (2020) in particular points to the significance of ethnic enclaves in Canada – not based on Vietnamese national origin, but around the ethnic Chinese community, for Vietnamese of Chinese origin. In explaining differences in employment rates between Montreal and Toronto, he finds that this ethnic enclave effect accounts for 22%. Furthermore, Hou’s (2020) analysis shows that the positive effect of ethnic enclaves in helping refugee employment was particularly strong in the initial years of resettlement, but diminished after about 10 years. Likewise, the observation in Gladwell (2020) that low-skilled Afghan care leavers tend to seek employment with Pakistanis suggest an important labour market role for ethno-linguistic, religious, and cultural links, which cross-cut national origin.

Group cohesion, and within-group inequality and diversity

The two migrant ‘groups’ considered in this collection are by no means homogeneous – in ethnic, political, or economic terms. Nor are the profiles of those belonging to these ‘groups’ across our four host countries; contrast, for instance, first wave Vietnamese involuntary migrants in the U.S. – who were mainly South Vietnamese with U.S. ties – with those in the U.K. – about 62% from northern Vietnam and 77% ethnic Chinese (Duke and Marshall 1995; as cited in Barber 2020). Barber (2020) attributes the lack of cohesion and comparatively weaker economic integration of the Vietnamese descent population in the U.K. in part to such diversity. Human capital factors also may contribute here. As Barber notes, Vietnamese migrants to the U.K. were relatively rural and poor compared to Vietnamese migrants in other countries. In U.S., for instance, 30% had a

professional/technical/managerial background, 70% were from urban areas, and only 4.9% were fishermen or farmers (the majority occupation in Vietnam at the time) (Bankston and Zhou 2020). That said, comparatively strong human capital alone does not necessarily go along with better integration outcomes. Stempel and Alemi (2020) show that Afghan migrants in the U.S. had higher educational levels and English abilities than other immigrant groups, yet this did not translate into better labour market outcomes overall.

Finally, the considerable diversity within the Afghan population in particular is worthy of note, alongside the salience of ethnic divisions in conflict in Afghanistan. Pashtuns form its largest ethnic group (about 40%), followed by Tajiks (about 30%), Hazara (about 15%), and multiple smaller groups. The majority are Muslim, but distinctions between Sunni and Shia sects also have been salient (Lamer and Foster 2011). While such divisions are reflected in migrant populations and might be expected to influence integration patterns, there is relatively little information available on these topics – both in this collection and in other work. This is another worthwhile area for future research.

Conclusion

This introduction considers economic integration and inequality between migrant and non-migrant groups in countries of settlement, an important area for continuing research. In so doing, it brings together diverse literatures. Drawing on segmented assimilation theory, it shows that multiple outcomes in horizontal inequality are likely to follow international migration, ranging from full integration and equality, to parallel and segmented integration, to deep and persistent inequality between groups. Key factors influencing which of these situations results include the context of reception in terms of governance institutions, the labour market, and co-ethnic communities, as well as the human capital of the migrant group and its groupness and cohesion. All five of these sets of factors can be seen in this collection. A collective reading of the cases, however, highlights several key points in particular: the substantial influence of governance policies and practices, both those targeted at migrants and general social welfare policies; labour market vulnerability and discrimination, which has been arguably more pronounced for Afghan and other Muslim migrants; ‘co-ethnic’ communities beyond national origin and their role in the labour market; and the significance of group cohesion and within-group diversity. These points in turn suggest key areas for future research.

Various other points and questions for future research emerge from a collective reading of the cases. For instance, how precisely does the size of a migrant group matter in understanding patterns of economic integration? Ethnic enclaves can help migrants to mitigate the effects of labour market discrimination, but the success of finding employment through such networks may be low if the group is very small, no matter how cohesive. Our cases suggest in such situations network building through other cross-cutting or ‘supra’ ethnic identities – such as ethnically Chinese, Muslim, or South Asian networks. Would more systematic patterns in terms of national origin group size and labour market integration be clear in a broader selection of cases?

Along different lines, what role does cultural distance play in economic integration? Stempel and Alemi (2020)’s finding that the comparatively low rate of employment among Afghan women in the U.S. helps to explain the comparatively low rate of overall employment among Afghan refugees, for one, may point in this direction – i.e.

that divergent attitudes and practice in terms of women in the workforce have impeded economic integration for this group. At the same time, Pendakur (2020)'s findings of strong labour force outcomes among second-generation Afghan-Canadian women points towards fluidity in such cultural attitudes. What is the role of diverse contexts of reception – in particular government policies – in how cultural norms change and influence behaviour over time?

Finally, given the growing significance of South-South migration, arguably the most important area for future research highlighted by this collection concerns processes of economic integration and impacts on horizontal inequality in the countries of the Global South. To what extent are patterns and influences in 'Southern' countries different or similar to those highlighted in this article in 'Northern' countries?

Notes

1. The relationship from inequality to international migration is another important area for future research, although beyond the scope of this collection (see Faist 2016; McKenzie 2017).
2. UNHCR (2000) says more than three million from Indochina.
3. Excluding returnees and IDPs. UNHCR Statistical Yearbook figures are not reported above for Vietnamese migrants because they are incomplete for our period of interest.

Acknowledgments

Warm thanks to the contributors of this collection for their collaboration and comments, and especially to Tamsin Barber and Phi Su. Contributions from Yusaku Horiuchi, Omar McDoom, Ayu Pratiwi, Jeffrey Pugh, Kunal Sen, Finn Tarp, and Lorraine Telfer-Taivainen are also gratefully acknowledged. This project has been supported by UNU-WIDER.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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