

## UCL Migration Research Unit

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### Locating myth, membership, and illegality in the media construction of Windrush – a discursive analysis

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Migration Research Unit



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## Abstract

The idea of the “Windrush Generation” was well established in 1998 as a symbol of postwar migration and “successful” British multiculturalism. Considering the arguments of British political theorists of the 1990s, that these triumphant Windrush narratives have misrepresented the experiences of racial discrimination that complicated feelings of national belonging for postwar Caribbean migrants and their children, the aim of this paper is to assess the extent to which the 2018 Windrush Scandal precipitated a reimagining of the symbolism of Windrush. Using discursive analysis, it explores the contemporary construction of “Windrush” within three British newspapers, before analysing the extent to which this draws upon, reinforces and/or reshapes common representations of migrant social inclusion. Building on ideas such as Bridget Anderson’s ‘community of value’ and debates around discourses of deportation, this project draws out the constructive role of normatively desirable characteristics to argue that the articles grounded the entitlement of Windrush migrants to British citizenship in terms of their cultural familiarity rather than their legal rights in a way that risked delegitimising the rights of non-ideal migrants, and ultimately naturalised the idea of migrant “illegality”. The paper then brings these literatures together to suggest that the pre-existing historiography of the Windrush Generation was crucial to this iteration of the ‘good migrant’, and that whilst the leveraging of the ‘positive’ iconic symbolism of Windrush facilitated a positive discursive construction of the Windrush generation across the political spectrum, it was simultaneously a mechanism for the articulation of a counter-narrative of ‘bad migrants’, which in turn risked erasing the racism of Britain’s hostile environment immigration policy.

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This paper is dedicated to the Windrush Generation and to all the victims of the hostile environment policy.

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## INTRODUCTION

In November 2017 the Guardian newspaper broke the story of Paulette Wilson, resident in the UK since the age of ten and former employee of the House of Commons canteen, who was detained in Yarls Wood detention centre and almost deported to Jamaica, the country of her birth that she had not visited in fifty years (Gentleman, 2019). Over the following months many similar stories were disclosed, stories which together revealed a pattern in which older British residents who had moved to the U.K. at a young age from Caribbean nations were now unable to work or to rent property because their legal status was under question. Taken together, these stories became known in the press as the Windrush Scandal.

However, this association of “Windrush” with scandal, wrongful deportation, destitution and discrimination could not be further from its previous symbolic incarnations of national significance. Taking its name from the *Empire Windrush* ship that arrived in Tilbury, England, on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1948, carrying passengers that included (among others) approximately 500 migrants from the Caribbean, the story of the Windrush generation has experienced oscillating inclusion/exclusion in British histories since 1948. Indeed, whilst the Pathé newsreel footage that captured its arrival led the *Empire Windrush* to garner more contemporary notice than either of its maritime predecessors, the *Almanzora* and the *Ormonde*, both of which arrived in 1947 (Kushner, 2012), there is nonetheless a general consensus that the *Empire Windrush* failed to make a significant impact on mainstream popular consciousness until the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its arrival in 1998. At this time, under New Labour’s push for a greater recognition of Britain’s multi-ethnic character and the contemporaneous boom in the British appetite for public history (Korte & Pirker, 2011:13), Windrush re-emerged, but this time constructed as the flagbearer for what Trevor and Mike Phillips termed *The Irresistible Rise of Multiracial Britain* (Phillips, 1998). However, in

drawing a neat line from Windrush as the tangible embodiment of the arrival of the postcolonial to the development of the multi-racial nation that is the modern Britain of today, the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* was re-imagined by journalists, the government, and public institutions including the BBC, in a way that eliminated many of the realities of discrimination that faced Caribbean migrants upon their arrival (Mead, 2009), leading it to be labelled by some as the “Windrush myth”. This is because the re-imagining has led scholars to describe the Windrush story that emerged as a ‘celebratory national narrative’ of triumphant multiculturalism (Hammond Perry, 2018:np), which acts as a ‘foundation myth’ of multicultural Britain (Korte and Pirker, 2011:26) and became symbolic of postwar Commonwealth migration overall (Samuel, 1998:17).

In light of the change in themes associated with “Windrush” represented by coverage of the Windrush Scandal, from celebratory multiculturalism to the denial of citizenship, this paper aims to analyse the construction of “Windrush” in contemporary media and explore the significance of this construction to wider migration discourses. Through a discursive analysis of newspaper articles, this study charts the symbolic content of “Windrush” from 2017 to 2020 and assesses the extent to which the scandal precipitated its further re-imagining. In so doing, my goal is to *denaturalise* the relationship between “Windrush” and the 2018 immigration scandal in order to examine the extent to which the historical narrative of the ‘Windrush myth’ was mobilised in the discursive representation of those affected. As part of this, I explore the literature critically assessing the 1990s windrush commemoration as an entry point for considering debates around the value of historical myth. Taking Bridget Anderson’s idea of the nation as a “community of value” as a starting point from which to examine how the normative character of national community can facilitate or withhold social inclusion, the study also explores how the representation was negotiated through other

discourses of migrant inclusion, including social membership, in a way that largely failed to deconstruct their more problematic aspects. Finally, it investigates the ramifications of this construction of membership for both naturalising ideas of migrant “illegality” and solidifying the boundaries of normatively defined community.

In order to explore these issues, the study revolves around four main research questions –

- **How does Windrush reporting change over time?**

Who and what is “Windrush” a symbol of? Does this change?

- **What is the relationship between past and present imaginations of Windrush?**

Does the Windrush of 2018 replicate the erasure of the Windrush myth?

- **How do the articles structure social membership for migrants?**

How is inclusion legitimated? Does citizenship exist in relation to the state or the local community? How are the boundaries of social membership imagined?

- **How is the idea of migrant “illegality” constructed within the articles?**

By reassessing the arguments of Barnor Hesse and Kenetta Hammond Perry – that the ‘myth’ of Windrush has erased real histories – in light of the return of “Windrush” to mainstream political narratives, I hope to add to the body of work that critically evaluated the national narratives of belonging created by the Windrush commemoration of 1998. By exploring the constructive effects of the wider migration discourses found within the text of the newspaper articles, I also hope to show the salience of this debate around Windrush to work on migrant citizenship, social boundaries and migrant “illegality”.

The project proceeds as follows. Following a note on terminology, there is first an outline of the key ideas of models of citizenship, social membership, and the production of migrant “illegality”, followed by a summary of the academic positions regarding the political consequences of the Windrush myth for the social inclusion of Black Britons. The choice to employ a Foucauldian interpretation of discourse is then explained, followed by an outline of the project’s research design. After a breakdown of the main discursive evolution of “Windrush” over the chosen period, I argue that contemporary media in fact replicated the failure of the 1998 ‘Windrush myth’ to engage with the experiences of race and racism that complicated the social inclusion of Caribbean migrants. I go on to assert the discursive construction of the inclusion of Windrush migrants to be based upon the characteristic of being “legal”, as well as normative ideas of good characteristics, in a way that disadvantages non-ideal migrants and risks naturalising the idea of migrant “illegality”.

### Terminology

Being aware that certain terms ‘signal more fundamental analytic categories that operate pervasively in the formulation of the subject at hand’ (De Genova, 2002:420), and wishing to *denaturalise* the inclusion of the Windrush myth in the story of the immigration scandal, in place of the “Windrush Generation”, as commonly found in the press, I will refer to the group of individuals who emigrated from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom after 1945, either as adults or children, as “postwar Caribbean migrants”. However, in the interest of clarity and concision I will use “Windrush” to refer to the subsection of these individuals who, as a result of government immigration policies, were deemed “illegal” or undocumented; thus I describe these individuals as “undocumented Windrush migrants” or “Windrush non-citizens”. It is worth being explicit that describing this group as ‘undocumented’ and “non-citizens” is not to

attempt to undermine their right to citizenship or cast aspersions on them as “illegal” – in fact, much the opposite. It aims to capture the essence of their predicament – being considered an “illegal immigrant” by the government in spite of their lawful entry and residency – and so expose that in this instance “illegality” was actively created and then sustained through the documentation demands of the immigration process. Further to this discussion of terminology, I follow De Genova in using the terms ‘irregular’, ‘unauthorised’ or ‘undocumented’ migrants instead of “illegal immigrant”, in order to unsettle the assumption of the existence of this category (2002:421).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into two parts. The first outlines how migration can be thought to both contest national models of citizenship and elucidate how boundaries of the national community are constructed. The second part interrogates the academic reception to the history and nation-building role of the “Windrush myth” and its symbolism prior to 2018, in order to establish a framework within which to assess the significance of the changing meaning of Windrush.

Migrant inclusion and exclusion – constructing the boundaries of social membership

Initially considered a challenge to the bounded political unit of the nation by authoritative scholars of citizenship such as Roger Brubaker (1992), both transnational existences and the distribution of rights once exclusive to citizens to resident migrants have tested established definitions of social inclusion. The deficiencies of models of national citizenship exposed by these challenges contest the idea of the state as the ultimate gatekeeper of social inclusion, an idea first explored in the seminal work of Yasmin Soysal (1994). Through highlighting the local and regional forms of belonging that exist separately from national identity, the extension of rights to migrant non-citizens through alternative, non-national channels, including supra-national organisations such as the European Union, and the diffusion of international liberal norms, such as human rights, this literature argued the devaluation of national citizenship (Jacobson, 1997). In contrast, this divorce of citizenship from the state has also been criticised by scholars such as Randall Hansen on the basis that it undervalues the ‘substance’ of citizenship, such as a national passport (2009:1), and thus overlooks the role of state in determining material aspects of residents’ legal rights.

However, it is worth noting that some scholars of citizenship, such as Christian Joppke, opt out of this dichotomisation (1999). Similarly, Nira Yuval-Davis contends that both sides of the debate invest too much in an unlikely binary, arguing that usually ‘people are citizens simultaneously in more than one political community’ (2007:562). She also compellingly suggests that important alternative dimensions of inclusion exist: both who is *felt* to belong, and what is commonly understood as the political meaning of inclusion that Yuval-Davis describes as ‘the politics of belonging’ (2007).

Considered against this backdrop, in capturing the processes of inclusion that occur informally as well as formally, social membership is an especially useful concept; it nonetheless again encompasses a number of meanings. Whilst Jacqueline Hagan defines it as ‘a set of basic social rights conferred on members of a society, including, for example, the right to work, the right to participate in political life, or the right to education’ (2006:631), in her study of migrant claim-making Zenia Hellgren considers social membership to refer to this and more, describing it as ‘both a set of formal rights and informal forms of ‘membership’, which refers to actual participation in society, for example integration into the local neighbourhood and labour market, regardless of legal status’ (2014:1177). Given its emphasis of the opportunities for legitimation presented by local participation, I employ Hellgren’s definition of social membership throughout this project. This is because recognising the significance of the informal widens what is understood as citizenship-making practices, which in turn allows greater recognition of non-citizen and undocumented migrants as political agents who create their own spaces of legitimacy (Anderson and Ruhs, 2010).

It is partly the question of which rights remain truly exclusive to *formally* determined citizens that animates Bridget Anderson’s work on the boundaries of social membership. However, in addition to exploring how the rights endowed by citizenship generate inclusion, her studies of deportation illuminate the exclusion enabled by its absence. Drawing on the

idea that deportation is only possible for non-citizens, Anderson *et al.* exploit this differential to show that, in providing certain protections, formal citizenship does indeed draw important legal boundaries of community. However, by interrogating the character judgements implicit in common justifications for deportation – in particular the those of criminality and fraudulence – they also suggest that deportation shows community membership to be *normatively* defined, stating that expulsion ‘affirms the political community’s idealised view of what membership should (or should not) mean’ (Anderson *et al.* 2011:549). In this model, social membership is an idealised set of values imagined to be commonly held within a national community that controls social inclusion or exclusion, in what Anderson describes as a ‘community of value’ (2013).

Significantly, normative social membership can again offer informal avenues of inclusion. In fact, the exercising of moral value judgements in ascribing the boundaries of membership potentially enables the entry of non-citizens who conform to the characteristic ideal of a given political community, regardless of legal status. This translates to the idea of *earning* citizenship, a process that Antoniou and Andersson, in their framework of how states’ rights policies determine migrant inclusion, claim is ‘less interested in how one becomes a member...and more in how that membership community is normatively conceived’ (2015:1710). Thus, in the model of normative membership, inclusion is determined according to moral value judgements that are mapped onto lifestyles and behaviours. Inscriptions of value coalesce around qualities deemed normatively desirable, including hard work and respect for the law (Anderson, 2013:3). It is this which creates what Jones *et al.* describe as a ““model migrant” stereotype of hyper-productivity’(2017:125), in which migrants seek to distance themselves from characterisations of non-citizens deemed unworthy for entry into the political community (Yukich, 2013), characterisations that

typically internalise xenophobic claims of migrants as simultaneously a burden on public finances, and usurping the opportunities of “true” citizens (Jones *et al.*, 2017).

Thus, the normative character of community can offer opportunities for inclusion to those “good” or “deserving” migrants possessing the qualities and values considered to be shared by society at large. However, it can also facilitate the exclusion of the undesirable, as the possession of characteristics thought to contravene ideals imagined as commonly held create individuals as unworthy or undeserving of belonging.

The causality implied in this case can also be considered in the opposite direction, wherein those outside the formal boundaries of social membership are assumed to possess undesirable qualities. This stigmatisation is in part because the state of being undeserving of belonging often elicits assumptions of criminality (Jones *et al.*, 2017:126), but De Genova suggests more broadly that this ‘social ignominy must be understood to be part of a larger sociopolitical production of migrant ‘illegality’ (2013:1181). Indeed, within the literature on the social construction of migrant “illegality”, Anderson finds evidence for this link between social disgrace and social exclusion in the symbolism of deportation, arguing that forced removal ‘establishes, in a particularly powerful and definitive way, that an individual is not fit for citizenship or even further residence in the society in question’ (Anderson *et al.* 2011:548).

In addition to analyses of government immigration policy, the idea of “illegality” as a socially and politically constructed state is greatly expanded through an academic approach that identifies both formal and informal practices as involved in the active creation of groups excluded from social membership (Gonzales and Sigona, 2017:4). The process of illegalisation has been examined in the work of Susan Bibler Coutin, who highlights that since “illegal” immigration is inseparable from the legal production of categories (2000), it is necessary to critically interrogate the assumptions that underpin state law. Drawing on

Coutin's work, Nicholas De Genova convincingly reinforces her idea of illegalisation as an active process, but emphasises the role of highly visible processes of enforcement to the sustained characterisation of immigration as a "problem" (2013).

However, other work has argued that alone these practical enactments of enforcement do not sustain illegalisation, rather that it is the distillation of the *representations* of these processes into a discourse of illegality that reproduces the exclusion the state implies, (Bischoff, 2014).

Locating the "Windrush Myth" in British historical narratives

In keeping with the seminal understandings of nationally determined citizenship mentioned previously, there is an established literature on nations as socially constructed communities defined by the differentiation between "self" and "other" (Anderson, 1983). However, these static assessments of nationhood, such as that presented by Brubaker (1992), often cast national case studies as "ideal types" based upon civic or ethnic membership, an approach that Oliver Zimmer criticises as unable to contain 'the discontinuously occurring public redefinitions of nationhood', and as 'particularly inadequate when it comes to analysing national identity as a public discourse as represented in newspapers' (Zimmer, 2003:177). As this research analyses newspaper articles, I will instead take Zimmer's understanding of national identity, as 'a public project rather than a fixed state of mind' (p.174), as a starting point for considering national community.

Within the literature on nationhood in relation to Britain, the problem of post-imperial identity is central (Joppke, 1999:105). Despite the apparent 'basic tension between nation and empire', twentieth century imperial decline forced a confrontation between the two very different political organisations and revealed an accommodation which has been described by

Krishan Kumar as a British “imperial nationalism” ‘that carries the stamp of its imperial past even when the empire is gone’ (Kumar, 2000:577). As well as having implications for nascent forms of nationalism, Goulbourne highlights that the collapse of imperial boundaries also created the “challenge” of a multi-ethnic society that was ‘national-British’ rather than ‘imperial-British’ (1991). He argues that multiple nationalisms have blocked the creation of a British national community that is at once plural and inclusive, suggesting that the recognition of British Africans, Asians and Caribbeans has been ‘constructed in such a manner that their legitimate presence and participation in Britain are nearly always questioned’ (1991:2). It is this description of race relations that is echoed by Barnor Hesse in his identification of the 1998 national Windrush celebrations as a dishonest ‘reappropriation’ of the ship into mainstream British historical narratives (2000:98). Hesse argues that whilst the ship had already been reclaimed as a point of origin for some Black British communities by 1998, within mainstream, white discourses in the intervening years, the *Empire Windrush* had become a symbol of the ‘racialised other’ that both perpetuated the idea of race as a problem to be solved and continually cast black Britons as strangers and intruders in their own country (p.98). Hannah Lowe would debate Hesse’s claim that the *Windrush* retained significant mnemonic potency among British-Caribbean communities before the 1990s, claiming its absence from influential biographies and papers, such as Stuart Hall’s 1984 *Reconstruction Work*, as evidence (2018:546). However, given that Charlotte Taylor’s 2020 study comparing the metaphors used in representations of Windrush-era migrants in 2018 and the 1950s, found that Windrush’s favourable depiction in 2018 contrasted significantly with the negative portrayals of the earlier period, I would argue that Hesse’s broader point still stands. That is, that the celebration of the *Empire Windrush* through commemorative processes, and even its integration as a foundational moment in mainstream British history ‘remains unwittingly ensnared at the level of merely *reappropriating* the images of a

newsreel that used to unsettle us' (Hesse, 2000:99). Inscribing Windrush as a symbol of national importance does not signal greater engagement with any potential previous symbolic incarnations, rather, it invites their erasure. Writing in late 2018, Hammond Perry arguably reformulates Hesse's critique in the contemporary era, suggesting the celebratory aspects of the popular Windrush narrative as 'distortions' that 'prove detrimental to those whose non-whiteness prevents them from being perceived as inherently and legitimately British' (2018:np). This would suggest Hesse's assertion of the emptiness of the 1998 Windrush commemoration to be even truer in light of the Windrush Scandal.

Whilst the celebratory story of the Windrush generation has come under considerable criticism from cultural theorists, this reception is far from universal. Often, those approaching the topic in terms of history or memory instead find legitimacy within the Windrush myth, based on the idea that selective memorialisation authenticates its own version of past events. It is this phenomenon that Matthew Mead explores in relation to the *Empire Windrush*. Mead suggests that the potency of the Windrush symbol as "the ship that inaugurated postwar commonwealth migration to Britain when it arrived in Tilbury on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1948 carrying 492 Jamaican men seeking a new life" – a phrase found in countless academic texts – arises not from the accuracy of this statement but from its repeated identical usage both academically and popularly, in what Mead terms 'the cumulative sedimentation of "fact"' (2009:139). The multiple instances where this ubiquitous story departs from the events suggested by the historical record – including the route of the ship, the number of passengers and their gender<sup>1</sup> – leads Mead to conclude that symbolic meaning has accrued to the "Windrush" not in recognition of the ship's arrival as a real event but rather as an imagined moment, a moment which fulfils what Mead identifies as a need to acknowledge 'a

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of the 1948 journey of the *Empire Windrush* and its passengers is beyond the scope of this paper, but can be found in Mead (2009) and Kushner (2012), among others.

revolutionary rupture in a national identity imagined as homogeneous' (p.137). In this way, Mead identifies the functionality of the Windrush symbol in shaping British historical narratives as a direct result of its mythical nature, rather than despite it. The work of historian Raphael Samuel on the construction of British history and identity reinforces this idea, through suggesting that 'the legendary can serve as a prelude to the historical, and the imaginary can double up with the real' (1998:11). Whilst Samuel was speaking of the portraits of Scottish monarchs that decorate Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, a collection and chronology that he suggests offers a semi-mythical dynasty upon which to build a fiction of a continuous Scottish nation, his sentiment might work just as well as an evaluation of the origin of the "Windrush myth" as a moment which can be offered up to trace the formation of British diasporas. Indeed, in her review of the discursive representations of the ship, Lowe underscores the importance of the Windrush myth in locating British black experiences in mainstream historical narratives that are overwhelmingly white (2018:552). However, it is important to note that the value found by Mead, Samuel and Lowe in the commemoration and mythologizing of the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* does not directly contest the critique brought by Hesse and Hammond Perry that it fails to engage meaningfully in past black experiences; rather it values the recognition the popularity of Windrush represents, regardless of its accuracy.

Historian Tony Kushner offers an alternative perspective on the political significance of historical memory. He uses the case study of the recent political debates over the "Dubs Amendment" to argue that both the idea of history in the abstract and a revisionist remembering of the *Kindertransport*, a project that brought thousands of Jewish children to the U.K. from central Europe in advance of World War II, were central elements in the determination of recent British government policy towards child refugees (2018). Kushner points out that – much like the *Empire Windrush* – the *Kindertransport* was largely forgotten

until its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1988, and claims that, despite its return to the historical narrative, the resultant historiography is 'limited, superficial and largely celebratory' (p.184). He suggests this relatively shallow reading of events allowed supporters of the Dubs Amendment to invoke British aid to European Jews as a triumph of 'past British generosity to the oppressed', even though this was in fact out of touch with the more complex and varied reality of British government policy towards Jews in the 1930s and 1940s (p.173). Thus, it is in this form, as significantly disconnected from the events its memory claims to invoke, that the *Kindertransport* came to be instrumentalised in contemporary political debates.

## METHODOLOGY

Norman Fairclough highlights the extensive influence of Foucault on the treatment of discourse within the social sciences, particularly with regard to the constructive effects of text (2003). Gillian Rose elaborates on these effects, considering how the particular definition of something as a problem implies particular strategies as its solution (2001). Given the pertinence of these discursive dynamics to the representation of migrants and migration, I decided to employ a Foucauldian approach for my research, and therefore sought to unpack how the language and text that acts to inform the public sphere is socially constituted, and to uncover this text's constructive potential.

### Foucauldian Discourse

There is no one 'Foucauldian' definition of discourse; not only did Foucault suggest multiple but his own methods of conducting discourse analysis changed over his lifetime (Rose, 2001). What is clear, however, is that Foucault's interest in "discourse" was as the process by which one explanation of the world becomes dominant over others (Mills, 1997:19). For this reason, the central idea that underpins the Foucauldian approach to discourse is that knowledge is socially constituted. This implies how certain narratives, ideas and interpretations of events become naturalised as "truth", in a way that necessarily silences alternative explanations. The result is that reality becomes that which is *expressed and reified as reality*, a process of stabilisation via texts and language which solidifies the 'categories, subjectivities and particularities' (Waitt, 2010:224), that underpin social life; for this reason Rose crystallises the approach as one in which 'discourse produces the world as it understands it' (2001:137).

Furthermore, the dimensions and contours along which reality are constructed are made invisible through this process of naturalisation. The functionality of discourse in building reality as something that *is* as opposed to something that is *constructed*, is why it should be considered as something that both conceals and enacts power. Thus, as a hidden but crucial aspect of social organisation, Foucault emphasised the “governmentality” of discourse to express that the constitution of knowledge – through discourse – is one way that power actually manifests in society (Dittmer, 2010). For this reason, a central aim of Foucauldian discourse analysis is disclosing these hidden structures, by revealing and unsettling the assumptions that sustain them.

As a conduit for the transmission of knowledge to a broad audience and with the power to set agendas and frame events, Foucault’s approach to discourse is particularly apt for analysis of news media text and language. It is well acknowledged that the media representation of migration has significant impact on the public reception to migrants, with, for instance, Rachel Rosen and Sarah Crafter (2018) finding that the essentialised image of “the child migrant” in British newspapers led members of the public to contest the authenticity of young unaccompanied migrants upon their arrival to the U.K. A paper by Hajo Boomgaarden and Rens Vliegenthart (2009) also found that changing framings and intensity of immigration news reports in Germany had macro-level effects on variations in anti-migrant sentiment.

#### Text Selection and Data Collection

Given the importance of the media in influencing the political conversation around migration through its portrayal of events (Caviedes, 2015), to study the representation of “Windrush” within popular paradigms I decided to analyse newspaper articles. I selected texts on the

following basis. Through the LexisNexis database I sourced newspaper articles containing the term ‘Windrush’ in the headline from three newspapers, The Guardian, The Times, and The Mail, from the period 21/11/2017 to 26/03/2020. This interval covered the week before the publication of the first Windrush Scandal story in the Guardian, up to the week after the publication of the Home Office *Lessons Learned* review into the scandal, authored by Wendy Williams. Given the specific importance of the Guardian newspaper to the emergence and sustained public notice of the Windrush Scandal as a news story, I first decided to analyse texts from this newspaper. However, to assess the possible influence of political and ideological attitudes to migration on the reporting of the story, to contrast with the Guardian’s left-wing and pro-mobility philosophy I also chose stories from the right-leaning Times newspaper, and the Daily Mail, a right-wing newspaper with more frequent negative portrayals of immigrants (Rosen and Crafter, 2018:75). I chose not to compare a local news outlet, both because this might create implicit geographies in my findings, and in light of a study by Andrea Lawlor, which found the reporting on migration issues to be mostly similar terms of frames and issues across national media and local papers, regardless of the size of the local migrant population (2015). Together, the three papers offer insights into reporting across political and ideological lines, in particular, from liberal to strict attitudes to immigration. The initial search returned 533 articles, an unmanageably large number. I nonetheless decided against additional search terms as during my pilot research I realised that specifying the search further through additional constraints, such as the inclusion of keywords related to my research questions, pre-biased my conclusions. I also opted against qualifying a minimum number of references to Windrush in the body of text; given that the focus of this study is the construction and symbolism of the term, its invocation or mobilisation remained relevant even if this was tangential to the article’s focus. Thus, in order to introduce an unbiased selection of the 533 texts within the constraints of a master’s

dissertation, I decided to use sampling; analysing every seventh article both satisfied the constraints set out above and helped me achieve my goal of assessing the development in coverage over time. After removing duplicates and letters to the editor, this returned 75 articles. However, as Foucault emphasised that meaning is created as much by what is unsaid as what is made explicit in text (Fairclough, 2003), I sought to operationalise absence within my research. This involved an additional search using Boolean operators: “(jamaica OR caribbean) and immigration and hlead(deport\* OR detention)” over the same period, in order to be able to analyse reporting on the same or similar cases, even if the label of Windrush was not attached. After separating out irrelevant pieces, this search returned 15 articles; therefore in addition to the sample of 75 articles referencing “Windrush”, in total I selected the text from 90 articles.

#### Data Analysis

Following the main features of qualitative analysis of text, I coded the text of the articles to identify recurring frames, images, themes and epistemologies, before carrying out a holistic analysis of which noted features of text were socially constitutive, and what they achieved.

#### Limitations

I encountered both practical and theoretical limitations when considering my research design. To better explore the significance of race and racial identity on the representation and construction of the Windrush Scandal, I initially also aimed to analyse coverage within *The Voice*, Britain’s foremost newspaper dedicated to black voices and perspectives. However,

articles from the Voice were not available on the Lexis archive, and the newspaper's own online archive only included editions published during and after 2019, which made it ultimately incomparable to the other reporting.

The absence of the angle that the Voice could have revealed is also felt in terms of theoretical limitations. It is important to acknowledge the limits of both this selection of newspapers, and the press in general, as a partial rather than total representation of society (Rosen and Crafter, 2018:70). Consequently, it is not my argument that this sample captures all salient aspects of the representation of Windrush – nor that all textual material results in direct and complete causal effects – but that it may suggest ways that existing myths and knowledge were used to build contemporary versions of events.

Furthermore, Erik Bleich *et al.* point out that the creation of a search to obtain a data set is itself a reification of certain formulations of migrant identities and social groups, giving the example of the different literatures that might be found depending on if a search is told to find stories about “Muslims”, “Pakistanis” or “refugees” (2015:865). Accordingly, I have aimed to be awake to, and critically evaluated, any acknowledgement of the intersecting identities of Windrush individuals within the articles.

## ANALYSIS

Charting the discursive evolution of “Windrush”

As a central aim of this project is unpacking when and how “Windrush” became part of “the Windrush Generation” and “the Windrush Scandal”, and how these compounds became reified as terms that not only existed but assumed specific meaning and symbolic content, I investigated the evolution in the representation of Windrush in media coverage. As a model for such analysis I used Jason Dittmer’s study of the role of print media in shaping spatial understandings of the term “Central Europe” (2005). Following his method of exploring changes in this term’s symbolic content by charting references to it over a given duration of reporting, I traced the chronological development of “Windrush” in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, and *The Mail* newspapers. Tracking the references to Windrush from late 2017 to early 2020 allowed for the identification and characterisation of three successive stages of reporting, each differing in the key framings, imagery, and definitions of those individuals involved. I argue that these stages signal an evolution in the discursive representation *and formation* of “Windrush”, through which it ultimately takes on new symbolic and metonymic functions as the image of immigration injustice and government cruelty.

I further find that, in taking on the function of describing and grouping the victims of this immigration scandal, the already-established celebratory history of Windrush became embedded in public understanding of events. I argue the result of this is that much of the compassionate and sympathetic framing of Windrush victims is constructed not in terms of a betrayal of their legal rights as rightful citizens, but as a betrayal of the foundational role and achievements of the “Windrush Generation”. Therefore, rather than fully unsettling the pre-existing symbolism of the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* ship as the inaugural moment of

post-war Commonwealth migration and the start of Britain's age of triumphant multiculturalism, I suggest that any new cultural understandings of Windrush build upon the old.

#### Phase 1 - Absence

This first phase of reporting identified from my analysis spans from November 2017 to March 2018, and is conspicuous in the fact that, unlike the scandal that these accounts would go on to define, there is no mention of Windrush in any form. Rather, the articles of this period can be characterised by deeply personal, biographical accounts of victims that construct images of hardship and injustice and evoke feelings of sympathy and anger. This centring of articles around personal stories also explains the relatively low intensity of reporting: new reports were written as and when people with similar experiences came forward. The result is that whilst a high proportion of reports contain original material, there are far fewer stories than in later periods, with an average of two new articles per month. Starting as a piece of investigative journalism, Guardian journalist Amelia Gentleman writes the majority of the reports; this is significant because even as authorship on the topic widens, pieces written by other journalists, including those in the Daily Mail, make reference to her earlier articles and, more significantly, mimic the sympathetic framing and biographical format she originated.

From the first article published on the topic, in the Guardian in November 2017, there were attempts to categorise the group potentially subject to unfair detention or removal, but these attempts did not use the shorthand of "Windrush". Instead, articles employed descriptions such as,

‘a **significant but unquantifiable** group of **older British residents**, who may have **arrived here from Commonwealth countries in the 1950s or 1960s as children**, whose **immigration status is unclear** because they have never needed to get a passport and **never formally applied for British citizenship**’, and ‘**long-settled, retirement-age UK residents** being pursued over their **immigration status**’<sup>2</sup> (Guardian, Gentleman, 29/11/17).

Whilst these definitions deploy a high number of different characteristics including age, origin, manner of arrival and immigration status, they remain ultimately vague and create a profile that is suggestive rather than highly specific. It was, perhaps, for this reason that the stories of two victims, Paulette Wilson and Antony Bryan, were included in a January 2018 article that provided an “update” on earlier reports of six individuals facing detention, removal and/or problems with their immigration status, each for different reasons (Guardian, 01/01/18). The stories ranged from a Finnish historian denied a registration certificate, the adopted children of an American NHS doctor denied a visa, and the return to the UK of a man removed by the Home Office to Afghanistan in breach of a court order. Tellingly, Wilson and Bryan’s stories are considered separately, and *no more* closely thematically linked than the other stories, constructing them as potentially generic rather than representative of a specific problem.

Despite the wider net thrown by broad category definitions there is a general consistency to the framing of the articles throughout this period. The majority fall within what I describe as a “justice frame”, in which a language of betrayal – as seen in the Mail headline ‘**SNUB TO WINDRUSH GENERATION OVER UK RIGHTS BETRAYAL**’ (16/04/18) – is mobilised, and narratives are drawn of honest men and women reduced to hardship following their unfair classification as “illegal” by the Home Office.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the paper, any **bold** font within article quotes has been added by myself

Whilst explored in greater detail later in this project, it is worth noting that a significant characteristic of this period of reporting is the use of the language of contribution to construct the biographies of victims. Individuals are characterised in terms of their contribution to the state and their families, whilst their productivity, normality, and “legality”, in both their manner of arrival and living, are all emphasised. The articles also structure the subjects’ lives as book-ended by two big and connected events – moving to England as a child, and the first realisation of a problem with their immigration status, many years later. Evoking the innocence and nostalgia of youth and the frailty of age constructs the subjects as either young children or elderly, and thereby connects Windrush non-citizens with categories of people often seen as vulnerable, and therefore sympathetic.

#### Phase 2 – Political crisis

Theresa May’s refusal to meet with Caribbean high commissioners in April 2018 to discuss the immigration problems faced by migrants from the West Indies catapulted the story to the front page; this was the start of a period of sustained, high-intensity reporting that spanned April to May 2018. Multiple new articles were published every day and the item became a main story across all three papers. In a marked contrast to the initial phase, “Windrush” became attached to events in several important ways.

Firstly, the location of the Windrush label within articles suggests it took on an ontological function, replacing the long-winded definition (seen above) as the primary means of delimiting, grouping and identifying the post-war Caribbean migrants encountering the specific difficulty of being unable to “prove” their rightful status after a near lifetime in the UK. This is epitomised in the ubiquitous labelling of those affected as members or children of the ‘Windrush Generation’, a bordering and demarcation that is further felt in the narrow

range of migrant-subjects considered in the articles of this period: Windrush cases were set apart, considered separately from other incidents of unclear or irregular immigration status.

Secondly, the main historical contours of the Windrush myth, that of Commonwealth subjects invited to the UK to work in the postwar era, were mapped onto the backstory of the victims. The earliest references to a ‘Windrush generation’ describe the group as ‘those that answered the call to come to the UK to work in essential services in the 1950s and 60s’ (Guardian, 13/04/18) and as ‘migrants named after the ship which brought the first generation of workers to Britain from the West Indies’ (Mail, 16/04/18). In these descriptions it is the historic experience of migration from the Caribbean to the UK that is used to group victims together, suggesting that it was this history which led journalists to mobilise the icon of Windrush. However, its invocation to identify a particular era of migration also produces Windrush as a means of *recognition*. This, notably, is in contrast to the previous popular usage of the term, which through its focus on a largely imagined narrative, could be considered to erase real, diverse experiences. Instead, in this instance, the pre-existing myth provided an identity that validated the *actual* experiences of those illegalised by the hostile environment policies.

Another key aspect of reporting in this period is how the frequent description of government behaviour as ‘shameful’ in the body of article text (Guardian, 25/04/18) and headlines – ‘Shameful Windrush Saga’ (Guardian, 17/04/18) – is made manifest in the construction of the story as the “Windrush *Scandal*”. This imbrication of immigration scandal with the image of Windrush as established in 1998 further collapsed distinctions between the two within media coverage. One result of this was that the set of dates within which one was deemed “eligible” to be a member of the Windrush Generation became the era which Windrush is popularly imagined to represent – from the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948 to the enactment of the 1971 Immigration Act in 1973. That these years became the de-

facto catchment period of the Windrush Generation is evident in government communications. The Times highlighted then-Prime Minister Theresa May saying of Albert Thompson, ‘the man was not part of the Windrush generation’ (19/04/18), because he arrived in mid-1973; later the Guardian reported that the Home Office had refused assistance to a man who said he entered the UK in 1976 as this ‘would mean he was not part of the pre-1973 Windrush cohort’ (12/09/18). Thus, the construction of “the Windrush generation” as existing within a fixed set of dates in many ways became a *more* important criteria for inclusion in the group than the similar experience of migration followed by legal status problems. As a result, the idea of “the Windrush Generation” became a means of exclusion, as well as recognition, as this bounding of Windrush effectively used dates to draw a circle around those deserving treatment as rightful British citizens, and separate them from those who remained ‘deportable’.

Whilst the addition of the ‘Windrush’ label served to better define and link events, in overshadowing and obscuring the *individual* experiences of migration, detention and undocumented status, it simultaneously *homogenised* the people it described. This is evident through repeated inscriptions of a generalised narrative in which personal experiences were swept up and collectivised. For instance, articles in all three newspapers prominently displayed government promises made “to the windrush generation”, with the Guardian detailing that ‘the home secretary has pledged that the Windrush generation will be granted British citizenship’ (23/04/18). This statement standardised postwar Caribbean migrants in terms of a lack of status, thereby imagining them all as non-citizens, and so failing to recognise that some had acquired citizenship via naturalisation or other routes.

The creation of the Windrush Scandal as a national, de-localised issue reinforced this anonymity of homogenisation. The geographies of Windrush become apparent when considering how few articles chose to ground cases in a given place, and are crystallised in

articles that explicitly name Windrush as a national distraction from local political issues, with one article headline suggesting ‘Social care should sway the local elections – not Windrush’ (Guardian, 02/05/18). However, this dichotomisation implies that Windrush migrants exist only in a national paradigm. The importance of geographic scale and proximity in determining the visibility of individuals within articles is articulated by the specificity of reports based in and around neighbourhoods populated by a higher number of postwar Caribbean migrants. Tellingly, in an article about the work of a Jewish, Brixton-based photographer who photographed many of the West Indian immigrant families resident there from the 1950s to 80s, Windrush migrants are described as ‘the new local Caribbean community’ (Guardian, 24/05/18). This indicates that a perspective located in Brixton provides an alternative way to conceptualise the Windrush generation, one in which Caribbean immigrant families are defined not by their presence within the Windrush myth, but by their *local* standing. Contrasting this article with others that ignore the view from localities further reveals that the reification of ‘the Windrush Generation’ as a national entity erased how these immigration status problems particularly afflicted certain communities – including neighbourhoods in South London, and Wolverhampton in the Midlands.

Thus, without completely abandoning them, the second phase of reporting was marked by a departure from the earlier emphasis on personal stories. The names of Paulette Wilson and Albert Thompson were still present but outnumbered by those of Theresa May and Amber Rudd. This transition also illustrates a key change in article frames. In contrast to the first period, many articles employ a political framing, in particular those published in *The Times*. This framing captures the increasing lines of causality drawn between the government’s “hostile environment” policy and the treatment of undocumented Windrush citizens, as well as how reports refracted events through the prism of Westminster. Under this refraction the “Windrush Scandal” is constructed as a ‘firefight’ for the home secretary

(Guardian, 26/04/18) and a mistake for which someone was, ultimately, singularly accountable – ‘there's only one person responsible for the Windrush affair, and the calamitous consequences of the hostile environment policy: Theresa May’ (Guardian, 01/05/18). The result in these reports is that the particulars of Windrush become almost incidental, as the scandal is used to shine a light on the inner workings of government and question the fitness of its actors, as indicated by revelations that ‘Cabinet ministers have told The Times they believe that Brexit supporters are deliberately stoking the Windrush affair to undermine her [Rudd’s] credibility’ (Times, 18/04/2018).

### Phase 3 – Another Windrush?

The third phase of reporting spans from June 2018 to March 2020, and although the intensity of reporting falls, articles encompass a greater range of themes and narratives than those of the earlier periods, with frames including justice, politics, race and history. There are more attempts to integrate the historical significance of the *Empire Windrush* ship with contemporary British society, but also more thought is given to the Windrush Scandal as an issue of immigration. In light of the revelations of the gravity of irregular legal status and the depth of Home Office dispassion, Windrush becomes the central component of critical explorations of British immigration policy, as suggested by article headlines such as, ‘If they don't secure the correct status, most EU nationals living in the UK post-Brexit will be classified as illegal immigrants. And after the Windrush scandal, we know what that looks like’ (Guardian, 08/10/19). Thus, undocumented Windrush migrants take on an *evidentiary* function as the living embodiment of Home Office incompetence and malice. The repeated suggestions that children of EU citizens living in the UK could become ‘a new Windrush generation’ (Guardian, 18/03/19), and questions of whether Windrush is ‘a harbinger of their [EU citizens] future treatment’ (Times, 27/04/18), reshapes the term “Windrush” into a

byword for the consequences of an unjust immigration system, although, crucially, these analogies largely erase issues of race.

The use of “Windrush” in this way also has wider discursive significance – given that to employ the term, journalists would have had an idea of the meaning they were invoking *and* an expectation that their audience supply the same understanding (Dittmer, 2005), and given that the articles in question were focused on immigration status and not migration from Commonwealth nations, it is apparent that by this point “Windrush” has taken on new cultural meanings, and metonymic functions. Whereas before 2018 “Windrush” was a metonym for postwar Caribbean migration, articles from 2018 to 20 reveal it became a metonym for immigration injustice. This transformation suggests that, whilst the understanding of Windrush as an emblem of postwar migration remained contained within the term, the overall symbolic content of “Windrush” was reconstructed from 2017 to 2020 to include the idea of government-induced problems with legal status.

## Discussion

Having established how the representation of the Windrush Scandal and its subjects changed from 2017 to 2020, here I will discuss certain elements of its discursive *formation* that bear deeper analysis. In particular, I explore the relationship between the Windrush of 1998 and of 2018, how this is negotiated through the articles' depiction of the social inclusion of the Windrush Generation, and finally how this depiction both represents and reproduces the boundaries of social membership and migrant "illegality".

### Deconstructing the Windrush myth?

Taking as a starting point my research question that queries the relationship between the past and present imaginations of Windrush, I will go on to consider whether the re-deployment of the image of Windrush in 2018 reinforced or contested the problematic aspects of the original Windrush symbolism.

In explaining why treating Windrush migrants as "deportable" was unjust, rather than grounding explanations in the idea of events as unlawful, reports leaned towards the construction of the scandal as a transgression not just of rights, but of the taken-for-granted fact of the full social inclusion of the Windrush generation within British society. Whilst this approach was likely intended as non-racist, in reality it refuses to engage with the material realities of discrimination and racism that continually question and prevent the inclusion of black British experiences into the national narrative (Prescod, 2017). In other words, in order to articulate the injustice of the legal challenges levelled at some Windrush migrants, articles represented them as foundational members of British society in a way that ultimately ignored

what Hammond Perry describes as the ‘role that racial formations and racism have played in shaping ideas about national belonging and the experience of citizenship’ (2018:np). This erasure of the impacts of racism on lived black experiences of belonging plays out as a paradox within the articles, wherein the social inclusion of postwar Caribbean migrants is presented as obvious, even as the same articles record the simultaneous demands faced by some to *authenticate* their belonging via documentation, in a process the articles refer to as “proving” citizenship (Guardian, 01/12/17, 18/09/18, etc.). Thus, explicit statements of belonging are undermined by descriptions of the pervasive processes that imply exclusion, highlighting that the discursive formation of Windrush might have been intended to, but largely fails to move beyond the status quo identified by Goulbourne, in which the national recognition of Black Britons is constructed to question the legitimacy of their presence (1991:2).

However, whilst discursive representations of exclusion bely claims of uncomplicated social membership, so the very content of the scandal and its description – the racism inherent in the Hostile Environment policy, and the infeasibility of government demands for document-based authentication – go some way to puncturing the image of triumphant multiculturalism that defined the 1998 imagination of Windrush, and was so criticised by theorists such as Hesse (2000). In fact, that long-standing British citizens from the Caribbean could be systematically stripped of their rights at all suggests that, in spite of commemorative gestures, knowledge of the Windrush story and its significance was not sufficiently wide to alert government figures that the claims of Windrush victims to longstanding residency were true, and/or significant in terms of their legal status. Indeed, an institutional ignorance of British imperial history was highlighted by Wendy Williams in her Lessons Learned review of the scandal as one of the leading reasons why it was able to take place (Williams, 2018).

Thus, whilst the contemporary media construction of “Windrush” failed to correct the erasure of the difficulties faced by Caribbean migrants upon their arrival, the very fact of the scandal went some way to questioning the uncritical embedding of Windrush within a celebratory national narrative. However, this was arguably in spite of its discursive construction, rather than because of it, as the majority of articles shaped Windrush in terms of a taken-for-granted social membership that denied the pervasive influence of racial discrimination in limiting the inclusion of black people and communities into national narratives of significance, and in so doing reproduced the spirit of the original “Windrush myth”.

#### Defining social membership

The discursive representation of social inclusion for postwar Caribbean migrants as “taken-for-granted” was constructed through a biographical approach that generated entire personal histories of the undocumented Windrush-era migrants from childhood to the present day. The recurrence of these subject biographies revealed notable similarities, not least the replication of format in which life stories were ostensibly drawn in alignment with the template of a “normal life”. In other words, biographies were constructed as pivoting around recognisable life events and familiar customs, including education, work, paying tax, and having a family. To capture the full effect, it bears quoting a small number of the many segments near in full –

The Guardian describes Anthony Bryan, as ‘attending London **primary and secondary schools, working** and paying **taxes** as a painter and decorator, helping to **bring up his children and seven grandchildren**’ (01/12/17).

In the Daily Mail, an account is given of Paulette Wilson, who ‘**attended primary and secondary school here and has 34 years of National Insurance payments. She also has a British daughter and grandchild**’ (Daily Mail, 02/12/17).

The description of Judy Griffith’s years in Britain include the story of when, ‘her mother bought her a pair of woolly slippers to keep out the Bedfordshire cold, and **enrolled her in primary school. For 52 years she has studied, worked and paid taxes in the UK**, employed variously by the Metropolitan police and Camden council’ (Guardian, 21/02/18).

In the Guardian, Sarah O’Connor is described as ‘having lived in the UK for **more than half a century, attending primary and secondary school here, working continuously, paying taxes and national insurance, holding a driving licence and voting in general elections; having been married for 17 years to someone British and having had four children here (all of whom have British passports)**’ (Guardian, 26/03/18).

The multiple repeated motifs are highly suggestive of the ‘systematicity of ideas’ that Sara Mills suggests define discursive structures (Mills, 1997:17), and thus indicate the constructive potential of the text. Considered together, these motifs emphasise common rites of passage experienced by many members of society, migrant and non-migrant alike. Rites which, as defining features of a British existence, suggest that the overall effect of the repeated template is the formation of Windrush migrants as *culturally familiar*. By emphasising conventional, typical life events, this discursive structure draws out likely

similarities between the personal experiences of the beleaguered members of the Windrush generation and those of newspaper readers, in a way that shapes Windrush migrants as fundamentally recognisable. This strategy is notable, as familiarity is opposite to the kind of othering that characterises much of the media reporting of migrants and/or deportable individuals (Eberl *et al.*, 2018), particularly in right-wing papers. Additionally, explicit references to the high number of years lived in the UK by article subjects – ‘52 years’, ‘more than half a century’ – creates them as long-established and thus, implicitly, as conversant with the country’s social rules and norms. This successfully evokes the strangeness and wrongness of the social alienation this group on the basis of them not being British.

Indeed, much is revealed about the imagined form of social membership through the construction of Britishness within the articles. For instance, the Guardian quotes then-home secretary Sajid Javid, who criticises the hostile environment on the basis that “it doesn’t represent our values as a country” (Guardian, 30/04/18), whilst another article claims the Conservative party is ‘earning itself a reputation for...treating British people of colour as less than British’ (Guardian, 01/05/18). Both quotes imply a set of behaviours and values that British people are expected to uphold and can expect to receive from others, suggesting that the formation of national community within the articles conforms to Anderson’s model of the community of value.

Furthermore, when evaluating legal status, there is an immediate collapse between the lived experience of nationhood and the material rights of national citizenship, with many subject interviews beginning or ending with statements on how their experience of being identified as not a *legal* British citizen had led them to question their identity as British, such as Sarah O’Connor, who said “They made me feel like I’m not British. I came home and cried” (Guardian, 26/03/18). Conflating legal rights with legitimate inclusion, and a feeling of belonging to the national community, suggests that the articles – and their interview subjects

– imagine social membership in terms of the distinctive relationship between a person and the state, a conceptualisation that reinforces national interpretations of citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 2007:562).

However, there is another dimension to the discursive representation of social membership. Ostensibly in contrast to the idea that the boundaries of community are drawn by state policy, the excerpts above evoke the entrenchment of their subjects in the cultural and political life in the UK through depictions of *local* connections, familial attachments and work commitments. This suggests that, in being forced to frame peoples' right to their country of residence without a clear legal status to define that relationship, journalists across all three papers chose to justify the right of Windrush migrants to remain on the basis of their belonging, as expressed through participation in democratic and fiscal processes and their social integration. Accordingly, it could be argued that the media coverage actually paints a picture of alternative, de-nationalised social membership, one more adherent to Suarez-Navaz's idea of the participative citizen, in which grass-roots integration in local communities is the foundation upon which to demand rights (Hellgren, 2014:1177). And yet, this informal interpretation of social membership is ultimately undermined within the articles, because the overall *message* of reporting was the need for the Home Office to rectify its mistakes and expedite citizenship for afflicted members of the Windrush generation. Thus, by confirming the centrality of *formal* means of inclusion that are exclusive to the government, the media representation of the Windrush Scandal also reified the authority of the state to govern the boundaries of social membership. This suggests that whilst some aspects of reporting contested the idea that de facto membership of a community is legislatively determined, these are undermined by the material authority of legal status, reinforcing the ideas of Anderson and Ruhs, who claim that 'calls for legal status cannot avoid reinscribing the power of the state in granting these rights' (2010:176).

Thus, regardless of which social agents are implied to determine its boundaries, a consistent discursive structure within all the articles is the representation of the Windrush generation as full members of the national community. However, the same descriptions of a lifetime of work and tax that construct the belonging of the Windrush generation also create them as normatively “good” individuals. In other words, depictions of their contribution create portrayals of people who are consistent with the qualities that the community at large have decided indicate value (Bendixsen, 2017:116). This is seen particularly in descriptions of Windrush individuals as productive and financially independent members of society, characteristics that were made explicit in some accounts, such as that of Renford McIntyre. He was described in the Guardian as having ‘spent 35 years working and paying taxes as a tool setter, a delivery man in the meat industry and an NHS driver,’ and quoted saying “I've been here for almost 50 years, I've worked night and day, I've paid into the kitty - but now no one wants to help me,” (Guardian, 21/02/18). This final image is especially evocative of making a claim on the state only after having first contributed to it. It is through discursive manoeuvres such as this that McIntyre is constructed as *deserving* of assistance and therefore a “deserving” migrant. However, whilst this strategy may bolster the claim to legitimate membership for victims of the Windrush Scandal it does so at the expense of other migrants unable to “earn” status. Furthermore, it reifies the differentiation of migrants into un/deserving categories (Ciulinaru, 2018), a process that also enables the social exclusion of non-ideal migrants, such as those with a criminal record.

However, the sample of newspapers studied here suggests that political affiliation is an important determinant of whether this differentiation is actively accepted and/or reified. When Sajid Javid claimed a flight of individuals, including Jamaican migrants, forcibly removed from the U.K., contained only criminals, most articles from the Guardian contested

the government's construction of categories of deportable and non-deportable non-citizens, but articles in the Mail and the Times reproduced them. Nonetheless, mentions of non-ideal *Windrush* individuals are conspicuously absent from all reports until the very end of the period, when there is an acknowledgement that they have been removed from the narrative.

The construction of Windrush migrants as normatively good has yet further significance in light of the work by Bridget Anderson, which suggests the boundaries of social membership to be normatively defined. Indeed, whilst the press implicitly campaign for the safe, legal, continued residency of Windrush migrants, they do so on the basis of this group as hard-working, productive, family-oriented, law-abiding, *and thus "British"* individuals. In other words, the articles make their claim for the rights of the Windrush generation based upon their pre-existing alignment with the normative ideals that bound British social membership. Regardless of the accuracy of this portrayal, constructing the claim to citizenship based on their identity as normatively 'worthy' individuals rather than legally entitled individuals locates their claim as already within the limits of the political community. This is significant, because it means that the discursive campaign to extend rights to undocumented Windrush migrants necessarily fails to 'expand the boundaries of community' (Anderson *et al.* 2011:560), as it implies said rights should be won on the basis of the pre-existing similarity of their recipients, which is thus, according to this model of inclusion, also their "Britishness". It is therefore possible to suggest that this represents a capitulation to the what Yuval-Davis might describe as the conservative 'politics of belonging' (2007), as it nests within socially conservative ideas of social membership based upon conforming to popularly defined ideas of "Britishness". This again disadvantages culturally dissimilar migrants, as models of assimilation imply one-sided integration (Ager and Strang, 2008).

The construction of normatively based inclusion reaches its apogee when, in addition to tales of individual contribution, there are references to the intangible cultural contributions of the entire Windrush Generation to society as it is today. Descriptions of the Windrush generation as “people who came and gave a lifetime of service” (Guardian, 22/02/18) and as people ‘whom fought for Britain during the Second World War, [and therefore] should never have been threatened with removal’ (Times, 24/04/18) suggest the fate of postwar Caribbean migrants to be crucial not just for their own welfare, but for the soul of the nation as a whole. This also serves to demonstrate how the history and symbolism contained in the Windrush myth of 1998 was used to represent the virtuous character of the contemporary Windrush-era migrants.

#### Constructing “illegality”

A discursive strategy common to the entire period is the bolstering of Windrush legitimacy through descriptions of its members as “legal”. However, such descriptions depended upon the dichotomisation of legal and illegal, suggesting that the discursive formation of Windrush reified the idea of “migrant illegality” as something real to be found.

Beginning with the legal production of illegality, Coutin suggests the need to critically assess immigration law as something that constitutes and produces illegality through the classification of individuals (2002). Whilst this may appear self-evident, De Genova draws attention to the propensity of academic work to at once highlight the invisibility of illegal immigrants, whilst leaving the laws that created them as such un-investigated (2002:432). However, in the case of the Windrush Scandal, the name and mechanisms of the “hostile environment” set of policies that alerted immigration authorities to the “irregular” or “undocumented” status of Windrush citizens, excluding them from all

parts of society and rendering some vulnerable to detention and deportation, are far from invisible. Perhaps because the explicit imagery of its name summons its intent as stated by Theresa May, “to create here in Britain a really hostile environment for illegal immigration” (Guardian, 17/04/18), explanations of the policy in public discourse have broadly acknowledged that it functioned by manipulating and greatly worsening the socio-political life of irregular migrants. This is felt in particular in the growing association between the hostile environment and the “go home vans” of 2013’s Operation Vaken, references to which become more frequent over time especially within the Guardian (15/11/18), (24/04/19), (14/09/19 etc.). This spectacle-making policy was intended to communicate the government’s “tough” stance on immigration but was soon derided as racist and ridiculous (Jones *et al.*, 2017:12) for its attempt to exclude and disavow migrant experiences of belonging. Thus, newspaper engagement with the vans’ notoriety, cruelty, and role as instruments of the hostile environment reflects a degree of engagement with the *materiality* of the law that De Genova claims is so lacking academically.

However, in the majority of articles studied, recognition of the practicality of the law did not extend to any questioning of the law’s ‘productivity of some of the most meaningful and salient parameters of sociopolitical life’ (De Genova, 2002:432). On the contrary, the articles repeatedly represented the Windrush generation as accidentally ‘entangled’ within the hostile environment, language that mimics the government message of the Hostile Environment as intended for “illegal immigrants”. The Guardian talks of the grave consequences of ‘becoming **entangled** in the government’s hostile immigration policies’ (21/03/20), whilst the Times questions ‘how members of the Windrush generation came to be **entangled** in measures designed for illegal immigrants’ (03/04/18). These descriptions reflect a basic capitulation to the assumptions that underpinned the policy’s enactment, and are therefore significant in signalling that the articles fundamentally *reproduced* the perspective

of the state, and therein the law's creators. Furthermore, yet more frequent allusions to Windrush migrants as 'wrongly caught up in' (28/11/17, 30/04/18), the policy discursively construct Windrush encounters with the hostile environment as an unintentional corruption of the policy's intent. Again, this construction takes at face value the government's claim that the law was not functioning as it was meant to, i.e. that the policy was there to detect illegality, not produce it. However, this takes illegality as a natural state of affairs, when scholars have showed that it is an active process (De Genova, 2002; Bischoff, 2014). Thus, by presenting Windrush victims as 'wrongly entangled', the press erased that it was the hostile environment policy which actively *produced* them as illegal, a discursive process that necessarily naturalises the concept of migrant "illegality".

The reification of "illegal immigration" creates immigration status as static and fixed and thereby denies the observed phenomenon in which migrants can repeatedly move between lawful and unlawful legal status (Jasso *et al.*, 2008), but it also formulates the 'legality', and thus legitimacy, of undocumented Windrush migrants by naturalising the supposed "illegality" of other migrants. This matters because whilst some articles – mainly opinion pieces written by migration specialists – condemn the hostile environment policy in its entirety, these are the outliers. The majority of reporting instead criticises the policy not on the basis of its existence or how it operates, but who it injures. This angle ultimately confirms the idea that the "illegality" of some migrants not only *exists*, but that it makes them legitimate targets of a policy acknowledged to destroy lives.

Having accepted the reality of migrant illegality, journalists mobilised contrasts between these "genuine" illegal immigrants and the Windrush generation as "mistakenly" illegal, to emphasise the "legality" of Windrush-era migrants. This was achieved through the instrumentalising of what De Genova describes as 'spectacles of migrant "illegality"... [that] rely significantly upon a constellation of images and discursive formations, which may be

taken to supply the scene of “exclusion” (2013:1183). Such spectacles were repeatedly evoked in the sample through depictions of interactions between members of the Windrush generation and the machinery of immigration enforcement.

The accounts of several Windrush victims describe their fears of deportation coalescing around the vision of immigration officials waiting at their front door; one report tells us that ‘for the **past two decades**, Glenda Caesar **has lived in constant fear** that at any moment she could get **a knock at the door and be deported**’ (Guardian, 20/04/18), whilst another describes Anthony Bryan’s experience when ‘**police and immigration officials** arrived early on a Sunday morning with a **battering ram, ready to knock down his front door (he opened it)**.’ (Guardian, 01/12/17). In describing the collision of Windrush citizens with the practical enactment of immigration enforcement, these accounts supply images of invasive law-keeping that use the familiar understanding of the “dawn raid” as enmeshed with illicit behaviour to elaborate how Windrush citizens have been drawn into the exclusion usually reserved for those deemed criminal. Indeed, the inclusion of ‘(he opened it)’ in parentheses serves to highlight the disparity between the expected “illegal” behaviour that would have necessitated use of the battering ram, and that observed in Bryan’s actions. Thus, in seeking to emphasise that Windrush non-citizens were innocent in both character and problems of status, journalists mobilised the iconography of illegal immigration. Whilst it was used to suggest the wrong-ness of Windrush exclusion, it ultimately naturalised associations between migrant “illegality” and criminality, and therefore facilitates the exclusion of others.

## CONCLUSION

As the irregular immigration status of Windrush Scandal subjects failed to clearly define the legal relationship between the individual and the state, unlike, for instance, holding a passport, this paper found that British newspaper articles framed the right of Windrush migrants to remain in the United Kingdom in terms of their long-standing attachment to the country. I have argued that the discursive construction of this attachment was achieved through depictions that emphasised the cultural familiarity of Windrush migrants in terms of their replication of socially respected values considered to be “British”, and thus that the articles appeal for the entry of the “Windrush Generation” to the national community not in terms of their legal entitlement, but their ability to meet the normatively defined criteria for social membership, an argument that at its core reproduces an assimilatory ‘politics of belonging’ (Yuval-Davis, 2007). Importantly, these assimilatory politics construct social value as allocated to “sameness”, a rhetoric that not only produces a one-sided approach to migrant integration, but potentially alienates culturally different individuals from the national political community.

Characterising the Windrush victims in terms of normatively “good” values also has the overall effect of creating them as deserving “model migrants” (Jones *et al.*, 2017), a portrayal which, whilst by no means untrue, hinged upon their repeated identification within the articles as “legal” as opposed to “illegal”. This constructed Windrush individuals as deserving of inclusion by distancing them from conventional depictions of the “illegal immigrant”, a strategy that ultimately reinforces the dichotomisation between different types of migrants. Not only does this reify “illegality” as a state to be found rather than something that is produced by state policy and law, but representing of Windrush migrants as wrongly “entangled” in the hostile environment in order to evoke their identity as lawful British

citizens has the effect of positioning a different group of undocumented migrants as correctly subject to the immigration controls described in these same articles as “inhumane”.

The combined effects of these discursive strategies are that whilst the reports successfully depict a group of people deeply wronged and hurt by the government, and therefore entitled to public sympathy, compensation, and recompense in the form of legal citizenship, they do so by suggesting them to be pre-existing members of Britain’s “community of value” (Anderson, 2013). This rhetoric ultimately positions Windrush migrants such that, upon the extension of rights to them, the boundaries of social membership are not expanded.

However, discursive analysis also revealed that a significant determinant of this inclusive representation of undocumented Windrush migrants was the pre-existing national resonance of the story of the *Empire Windrush* ship. Acting as a means to both link and delimit those involved in the political “Windrush Scandal”, the relevance of the celebratory historiography created during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 1998 was felt in the representation of the fate of postwar Caribbean migrants as important not just for them, but for the nation as a whole.

Thus, the version of “Windrush” constructed in 2018 is not separate from, but rather an updated incarnation of the one created and popularised in 1998. The changes in its imagined shape wrought by the Windrush Scandal are made clear in the integration of “Windrush” in debates surrounding the impending legal-status problems posed by Brexit, which implies that the symbolic content of the term was expanded by the scandal to include understandings of immigration injustice and the denial of rights. However, the taken-for-granted approach to the representation of the social membership of Windrush migrants highlights a discursive mobilisation of historical narratives that position the story of Windrush as entwined with the story of multicultural Britain’s becoming. However, the result

of this mobilisation is that rather than deconstructing the parts of the original Windrush myth that erase the racism and exclusion faced by postwar Caribbean migrants, reporting on the Windrush scandal largely hides them further. Thus, whilst the very *facts* of the immigration scandal may have dented the triumphant tone of the Windrush story, the discursive representation of the Windrush Scandal largely sustained it.

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