

“I Came Here, and it Got Worse Day by Day”: Examining the Intersections Between Migrant Precarity and Family Violence Among Women with Insecure Migration Status in Australia

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Abstract

While understanding the diversity of women’s lived experiences is a key focus area in the international feminist literature on family violence, research with migrant women in Australia remains limited. This article seeks to contribute to the growing body of intersectional feminist scholarship that examines how immigration or “migration status” impacts the dynamics of migrant women’s experiences of family violence. The article examines precarity in relation to migrant women’s lives in Australia and focuses on the ways that their specific circumstances contribute to and are compounded by the experience of family violence. It also considers how precarity functions as a structural condition that has implications in terms of various forms or patterns of inequality that can heighten women’s vulnerability to violence and undermine their efforts to ensure their safety and survival.

Keywords

migrant women, domestic and family violence, migration policies, migration status, precarity

Introduction

Women from diverse ethnic backgrounds migrate to Australia in significant numbers each year, residing in urban, regional, and rural locations on a variety of visas.

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While for some, migration is intended to be temporary, for others, the granting of a visa is the first step toward permanent settlement or obtaining formal citizenship. Historically, women and their families have moved to the country within a “settler-citizen” paradigm; however, research shows that the migration landscape is changing (Robertson, 2016). The prioritization of skilled forms of immigration since the 1990s has seen successive governments select permanent immigrants according to their potential contribution to the national economy (Walsh, 2011). The move to tie immigration to the needs of the labor market has seen other forms of movement such as family reunion become subject to increased scrutiny and regulation. Temporary migration for the purposes of work and study has also emerged as a key component of the policy landscape (Mares, 2012) and migration scholars have examined how its growth has introduced “a new class of differentially included precarious migrants into the polity” (Koleth, 2017, p. 33). While, as scholars such as Pratt and Yeoh (2003, p. 161) have pointed out, women may experience “gains in gender equity” as a result of migration, changes to migration policies and citizenship ideals have specific implications for women who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing family violence. Despite the high rates of migration to the country, knowledge about the ways in which different groups of migrant women experience family violence in Australia remains limited.

Since 2010, federal, state, and territory governments in Australia have re-established their commitment to addressing the prevalence of violence against women and their children with the implementation of various action plans for reform. At the federal level, the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 sets out a 12-year framework for action with an established commitment to addressing diverse experiences of family violence. In 2014, the Victorian Government established a Royal Commission into Family Violence (VRCFV), the findings of which have formed the basis of the state’s reform agenda over the last six years. In its final report, the VRCFV acknowledged that the experiences of people within specific communities such as “culturally and linguistically diverse” communities need to be recognized to ensure policies are representative of the diversity of the broader Victorian community (VRCFV, 2016, p. 109). It also discussed the need to document the barriers faced by specific groups, including women without permanent residency, noting that issues of legal dependency are significant as “a considerable power differential arises when a woman’s partner has permanent residency and she does not,” which can “increase the risk of violence” (VRCFV, 2016, p. 109). In response to these efforts, Australian feminist researchers have sought to examine the impact of insecure migration status on women who are experiencing family violence (e.g., Segrave, 2017, 2018; Vaughan et al., 2016). This research has drawn important findings, analyzing the ways that state policies and laws can influence migrant women’s vulnerability to violence, as well as their ability to seek help and access support.

Drawing on interviews with 23 professional stakeholders and 18 victim-survivors who experienced violence while they were living in Victoria, Australia, I seek to contribute to the growing body of international feminist scholarship that examines how

immigration or “migration status” shapes women’s vulnerability to and experiences of family violence (e.g., Anitha, 2011; McIlwaine et al., 2019; Segrave, 2017; Voolma, 2018).¹ To do so I focus on the experiences of victim-survivors with a range of “insecure migration statuses,” who arrive to the country “with limits in terms of voice, membership, and rights in a political community” (Goldring & Landolt, 2013, p. 3; see also Voolma, 2018). The term “insecure migration status” is defined in this article to include women who are living, working, or studying in Australia, are non-citizens, and have a form of status that is: *dependent or conditional* (e.g., sponsored partners, prospective marriage visa holders, and a smaller number of skilled migrants on provisional visas; these visas can lead to permanence if certain conditions such as serving a wait period are met); or *temporary* (e.g., primary and secondary holders of student, work, tourist, and other visas that expire after a specific time or period of activity). Also included within this definition are women who are transitioning their status and are *waiting on the outcome of a visa application* (e.g., bridging visa holders), those *without a valid visa* (e.g., due to expiry or cancellation), and women—including permanent residents—who are *unaware of their migration status* (i.e., believed their status was dependent).²

I also draw on the lens of “precarity” to interpret women’s experiences and in doing so seek to generate further insight into the structural and systemic factors that influence the dynamics of family violence against migrant women in Western multicultural societies such as Australia (Sokoloff, 2008). In the migration studies literature, “precarity” refers to the effects of contingent or insecure legal and/or employment status and has been used to describe the conditions faced by many migrants worldwide (Goldring et al., 2009). A growing body of feminist research has shown that migration status is an “important marker for precarity” and that migrant women are susceptible to multiple forms of institutional, social, and economic precarity within and beyond the workplace (Piper & Lee, 2016, p. 477). In this article, I examine precarity in relation to migrant women’s lives in Australia and focus on the ways that their specific circumstances contribute to and are compounded by the experience of family violence. I seek to demonstrate that women’s insecure migration status intersects with other factors to impact not only their vulnerability to violence, but also their vulnerability to further legal, social, and economic precarity. I argue that precarity functions as a structural condition that has implications in terms of various forms or patterns of inequality that can impact migrant women’s experiences of violence in Australia, as well as their efforts to ensure their safety and survival. The article begins by summarizing the literature on family violence against migrant women with a focus on studies that examine the influence of state migration policies on their lived experiences. I then introduce the concept of precarity and discuss how it has been applied in different fields, including by feminist scholars in the migration context. In the second part, I discuss the research design. Next, I examine the intersections between precarity and family violence and explicate three components of precarity that characterize migrant women’s lives: legal, social, and economic. In the fifth part, I examine how precarity limits women’s options outside the relationship and contributes to “entrapment” (e.g., Stark, 2007). I conclude the article by considering some of the implications

that can be drawn from an analysis of migrant women's lived experiences in government efforts to target violence against women.

Literature Review

Migrant Women's Vulnerability to and Experiences of Family Violence

Despite policy-level efforts to address violence against women and their children across the country, research shows that rates continue to remain high (Fitz-Gibbon, 2021). It is currently unclear whether migrant women in Australia experience more or less violence than victim-survivors from non-migrant groups (Vaughan et al., 2015). Recent findings from the first national survey on migrant and refugee women's safety indicate that approximately 30% of all respondents had experienced some form of domestic and family violence, which intensified in the context of COVID-19 (Segrave et al., 2021). From an international perspective, few studies on the prevalence of family violence against migrant women have been conducted outside North America and there are significant differences in prevalence rates across these studies (Gonçalves & Matos, 2016). Studies exploring differences among women with varied migration statuses also remain limited and findings about whether migration status is a significant factor to predict family violence are mixed (e.g., Bø Vatnar & Bjørkly, 2010).

Qualitative studies have highlighted the diversity of family violence for migrant women in destination countries, which can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal, economic, social, or technological (e.g., Segrave, 2017; Vaughan et al., 2016). More recent research on migrant women's experiences has focused on coercive control as a pattern of abuse (Anitha, 2019; Anitha, Roy, et al., 2018; Chantler & McCarry, 2020; Segrave, 2018, 2021; Singh & Sidhu, 2020; Tarzia et al., 2022). Chantler and McCarry (2020, pp. 105, 91) have argued that using coercive control as an "analytic frame" in research about migrant women's experiences, "allows for a nuanced and multilayered analysis by illuminating the under-appreciated dynamics relating to gender-based violence in particular contexts." Research has focused on the specificities of coercive control for migrant women through, for example, an examination of the process of "transnational spouse abandonment," which "is sustained by intersecting structural inequalities" related to gender and migration and facilitates women's exploitation in intimate relationships (Anitha, Yalamarty, et al., 2018, p. 67). Barlow and Walklate (2022, p. 51) also point to research which shows that migrant women tend to be disadvantaged by state policies as these replicate the "structures of coercive control" they experience in intimate relationships and form part of a continuum of violence and abuse.

In addition to research that focuses on the forms and patterns of family violence are studies that qualitatively explore the dynamics of migrant women's lived experiences. Studies have drawn attention to the ways that a woman's status as a migrant works together with gender inequality to shape their vulnerability to experiencing family violence in destination countries, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United

Kingdom, and the United States (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002). Researchers have shown that while specific cultural contexts are important in discussions of gender differences and inequalities, so too are migration situations (Kapur & Zajicek, 2018). Gender roles and expectations within families can change as a result of migration (Lee & Choi, 2022). These disruptions, as well as the ways that gender intersects with other social hierarchies in countries of destination, have been shown to be connected to women's experiences.

Feminist researchers who take an intersectional approach have examined how migrant women's vulnerability to violence is shaped by cultural and structural factors that heighten their dependency on a partner, and a series of barriers that impact women's ability to access support from the state and relevant services (e.g., Abraham, 2000a; Erez et al., 2009; Pearce & Sokoloff, 2013). In her seminal article, Crenshaw (1991, p. 1249) examined how immigrant women's vulnerability to violence is shaped at the intersections of different systems and patterns of subordination, which produce structural barriers that "exacerbate" existing inequalities and limit women's options. Since this time, feminist researchers have acknowledged the significance of citizenship or "immigration" as a social location, arguing that it shapes the experience of violence "with an entire set of dynamics that differs from racial or ethnic origin" (Pearce & Sokoloff, 2013, p. 789). Studies have shown how factors, such as immigration or visa issues, social isolation, lack of familiarity with institutional systems, migrant women's access to social resources and the labor market, and oppressive stereotypes, influence family violence in specific ways (e.g., Erez et al., 2009). Pearce and Sokoloff (2013, pp. 786, 791) have argued that research that treats "immigration" as a sociological category and examines the issue of violence "*across* national origins" can "avoid the trap of essentializing cultures as more or less violent" as well as generate insight into the commonalities in the experiences of women from different ethnic backgrounds. They also "disaggregate" the category of immigration, showing that it is shaped by: the contexts of women's exit from countries of origin or departure, the contexts of women's reception in destination countries, social hierarchies related to race and class, and cultural heritage (Pearce & Sokoloff, 2013). Intersectional research of this kind has provided a useful framework for researchers who explore the nature and dynamics of migrant women's lived experiences, including how they are influenced by state policies and practices in different national contexts.

Existing qualitative research on family violence has also focused on the experiences of different cohorts of migrants, including undocumented women (e.g., Ingram et al., 2010), family migrants (e.g., holders of partner/spouse or fiancé visas; Anitha, 2008, 2011), and to a lesser extent students (e.g., Forbes-Mewett & McCulloch, 2016), workers (e.g., Villegas, 2019), and secondary applicants (e.g., Shah, 2007). These studies have shown that violence is often enabled by restrictive migration policies that limit women's entitlements and tie them to an abusive partner. Anitha's (2011, p. 1261) research in the United Kingdom, for example, highlights that marriage migrants are disadvantaged by intersecting inequalities related to "culture, gender, class, and race," as well as "state immigration and welfare policies," which can exacerbate patriarchal structures within families and result in "intensified forms and specific

patterns of abuse.” In their survey with women in the United Kingdom, McIlwaine et al. (2019) also found that there is a link between women’s insecure immigration status and their vulnerability to multiple forms of violence by more than one family member. Research with temporary workers in the United States has revealed the “constellation” of legal, structural, and gender-based violence that women are exposed to (Cook Heffron, 2019, p. 685), and undocumented women are also known to experience “ontological insecurity,” which elevates their fears regarding the safety of and potential separation from their children (Parson & Heckert, 2014).

Recent Australian research has also led to important findings about the experiences of different groups of migrants, including temporary visa holders who differ by ethnicity and national origin (e.g., Forbes-Mewett & McCulloch, 2016; Segrave, 2017, 2018; Vaughan et al., 2016). Segrave’s (2017, 2018) case file analysis has shed light on the ways that perpetrators use misinformation and threats regarding women’s migration status to control women and limit their autonomy. Her research highlights the need for greater recognition of the ways that migration status can be used as leverage for violence and control, and argues that in its current form, the migration system creates an “institutional layer of vulnerability” for women who have limited guarantees of access to support (Segrave, 2018, p. 137). In their research, Vaughan et al. (2016, p. 48) also found that perpetrators used and benefited from women’s “specific circumstances” as *immigrants* and that this was exacerbated in instances where women were socially isolated and had limited knowledge of their rights in Australia or information about access to family violence support.

In summary, feminist research has generated important findings about the influence of migration policies on women’s experiences. Most empirical research exploring the relationship between migration status and family violence has focused on specific sub-sets of women, such as marriage or undocumented migrants. Fewer studies have examined the commonalities experienced by victim-survivors with different forms of insecure migration status who differ according to ethnicity and national origin (some exceptions include Erez et al., 2009; McIlwaine et al., 2019; Segrave, 2017; Vaughan et al., 2016; Voolma, 2018) and only one of these studies involves interviews with victim-survivors in Australia (Vaughan et al., 2016). The present study has sought to contribute to existing understandings by focusing on the characteristics of women’s daily lives following the move to Australia, and the specific circumstances that can make them vulnerable. To do this I follow the work of migration scholars and draw on the lens of precarity to interpret women’s experiences. Next, I explore the concept of precarity and how it has been applied in different fields, including by feminist scholars in the migration context, which I suggest provides a useful lens to analyze migrant women’s lived experiences of family violence in Australia.

Migration, Precarity, and Gendered Violence

Precarity is an “umbrella concept” (Casas-Cortés, 2014, p. 215) that has been used across a range of disciplines to describe a historical moment in time that is characterized by uncertainty and a lack of predictability (Kalleberg, 2018; see also Butler,

2009). It also describes insecurity in employment and labor relations, including the rise in economic inequality in post-Fordist societies of the global North (e.g., Standing, 2011). Precarity is understood to be the product of structural forces, such as globalization, privatization, datafication, and the rise in neoliberal governance. Kalleberg (2018, p. 24) discusses that the concept was first invoked to describe an emerging form of *domination* in late capitalism that functions as a type of ontological insecurity and contributes to the ways that workers are exploited. Schierup and Jørgensen (2016, p. 2) have examined how the restructuring of labor markets has reoriented national citizenship regimes, weakened essential rights, and undermined political agency. While variations of precarity exist on a global scale, individuals who are exposed to it share “common features in terms of conditionality and a contingent disposition for agency” (Schierup & Jørgensen, 2016, p. 2).

As migration is a key component and a consequence of contemporary capitalism, migrants can be seen to be disproportionately affected by increasing *precaritization* (Schierup & Jørgensen, 2017). Jørgensen (2016, p. 960) considers how precarity functions as a “structural condition” that plays out at the “core” of a migrant’s daily existence. Bélanger and Tran Giang (2013, p. 6) argue that structural precarity is “legally produced” and migrants are in a “precarious state” because of “their limited entitlement to social protection and their mandatory return, which prevents them from accessing legal and social citizenship.” Casas-Cortés (2014, p. 218) discusses the rigidity of state migration policies and argues that it is the “proliferation of uncertainty” that “transforms precarity into something that concerns overall existence.” While precarity has emerged as a way to speak about the denial of citizenship in late capitalism, researchers have also examined the ways that migrants negotiate power structures and express their agency to elicit change (e.g., Schierup & Jørgensen, 2016) and ensure their safety and survival (e.g., Paret & Gleeson, 2016).

It is because of their legal or migratory status that specific categories of migrants (e.g., domestic and temporary workers, migrant spouses, and asylum seekers) are seen to “share a precarity that is rooted in the conditionality of presence and access” (Goldring & Landolt, 2013, p. 3). As a structural condition, precarity is produced by a range of elements, including different configurations of rights (e.g., employment, social, and political rights), limits on the right to permanent status, and forms of conditional residency (e.g., as maintained by sponsorship practices), which can make migrants vulnerable to harm (Goldring et al., 2009). In recent years, migration status has come to be viewed as a key “marker” of precarity (Piper et al., 2017, p. 1089) and empirical research has documented the complex forms of precarity different categories of migrants are exposed to at work and across all aspects of everyday life (e.g., Hennebray, 2014).

Feminist research has begun to document how the vulnerability of different groups of migrants may be exacerbated under certain conditions as they move within and across “patriarchal regimes and gendered labour markets” (Bélanger & Tran Giang, 2013, p. 6). Şenses (2020, p. 58) has argued that migration status impacts men and women differently and that migrant women tend to be disadvantaged by their “status vis-à-vis the state,” which “makes them increasingly vulnerable especially

when there is abuse of rights.” Empirical studies that focus on the ways precarity is gendered have also considered how it intersects with other categories of social difference (e.g., ethnicity and class) to shape women’s experiences in the workplace (e.g., of exploitation and discrimination; Platt et al., 2017; Villegas, 2019). Research has also focused on precarity and women’s reproductive labor, with studies highlighting the ways that different groups of migrant women “are exposed to multi-layered forms of precarity” (Kim, 2017, p. 1) in and outside the labor market. Kim (2017, p. 1; see also Briddick, 2020) argues that marriage migrants are a “distinct group of ‘precariats’” as their “labor and intimate lives are under a perpetual state of instability and insecurity.”

Recent research has also begun to explore the relationship between precarity and forms of gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment and family violence. As El-Abani et al. (2020, p. 113) have argued, “structural forms of precarious social relations” produce a “hyper-precariety” that influences migrant subjectivities and identities and permeates homes, workplaces, and the wider society. Villegas (2019) qualitatively explores the complex interdependencies that shape migrant women’s lives in Canada, including how women’s gender and precarious employment can intersect with the “conditionality” or precarity of migration status, leaving women with few options to better their situation even in instances where they are not dependent on a partner for their migration status. A recent study with asylum-seeking women in Greece more closely examines how “precariety interweaves with gender-based violence” (Tastsoglou et al., 2021, para 1). Tastsoglou et al. (2021, para 6) argue that state policies regulate and “contain” migrant women in “gendered and intersectional ways” and that the precarity women experience “is tantamount to institutional/structural GBV and ... either increases the risk for interpersonal GVB or directly contributes to reproducing it.” This growing body of scholarship draws attention to the varied forms of precarity to which migrant women are exposed, and the ways they counter the disadvantages associated with their status by exercising their agency in different contexts. As I discuss in the next section, the present study has sought to contribute to existing understandings of the effects of migration status on family violence by conducting research with women about their lived experiences, as well as the professional stakeholders who support them.

Method

Research Design

This study explored the experiences of family violence among women with insecure migration status in Australia. It sought to contribute to existing research that documents the impact of visa issues on women’s experiences of violence, investigates the factors that influence their help-seeking, and seeks to better understand how women access support. The research was conducted across two consecutive phases. The first phase involved participant observation at various events that were taking place across the family violence sector in the aftermath of the VRCFV between 2017 and 2018. It

also involved 23 in-depth interviews with professional stakeholders working within the family violence system in Victoria, which took place in 2018. The second phase involved in-depth interviews with 18 victim-survivors, which were conducted between 2018 and 2019.

The research was informed by the work of critical standpoint theorists who view knowledge as socially situated and consider how alternative sources of knowledge have the potential to challenge the status quo (e.g., Collins, 2000). Since the 1990s, feminist scholars have used standpoint theory to highlight the experiences of marginalized women in qualitative research on family violence, which has generated new ways of thinking about the impact of systems of discrimination and oppression on the “structural root causes of violence” (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005, p. 39). I also followed Abraham (2000a, p. xi) who has argued that any understanding of violence would not be complete “without an account of the experiences of those who are often deemed ‘invisible others’ because of their ethnicity, race, class, and legal status.” A qualitative design was also chosen as this generates rich, descriptive data, and enables individuals to express ideas about their experiences in their own words (Leavy, 2017).

Participants

Professional stakeholders were recruited through researcher networks, discussions at sector events, and cold calling. Stakeholders were recruited from the following services: frontline family violence service ($n = 3$); women’s refuge ($n = 1$); community legal center ($n = 1$); ethno-specific women’s organization ($n = 1$); homelessness service ($n = 1$); settlement/migration service ($n = 3$); migrant women’s organization ($n = 1$); and the courts ($n = 1$). In total, 13 interviews were conducted with 21 stakeholders from these services who worked in the following roles: manager ($n = 1$); victim support worker ($n = 9$); lawyer ($n = 2$); settlement social worker ($n = 3$); housing advocate ($n = 1$); grassroots advocate ($n = 3$); project officer/researcher ($n = 1$); and court social worker ($n = 1$). The remaining stakeholders worked independently as a psychologist ($n = 1$) and were engaged in community advocacy ($n = 1$). Stakeholders also differed according to migration status and most identified as being from an immigrant background.

Some victim-survivors were recruited through stakeholder networks via dissemination of a project flyer with my contact details. With permission, copies of the flyer were also disseminated on social media and at targeted locations across the state (e.g., community libraries and centers). Victim-survivors were also recruited via word of mouth. Participants were over the age of 18, living in Victoria, and had experienced family violence when their migration status was “insecure.” Participation was limited to women who were no longer experiencing violence.

The women interviewed differed according to ethnicity and all women were born outside Australia, in Armenia, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. They were also highly educated with the majority holding a university degree. For all participants, English was not their first language; however, the majority had a level of proficiency when they arrived. Most women were between the ages of 20 and 38 at the time of the interview.

Women migrated to Australia for a range of reasons and under different circumstances. While some explained that they had migrated to pursue further education, others had come to the country for or as a result of marriage. Other women stated that they moved for economic reasons with the intention of settling permanently. Thirteen women were married and three were engaged or partnered prior to migrating to Australia for the first time. Around half explained that they had been partnered for a period of less than two years at the time they relocated to Australia. Six said that their marriages were arranged in the country of origin and two women met their partners online. Others were introduced to their partners through mutual friends. Only two women were single at the time of migration and met their partners after living in the community for several years. When they first arrived in the country, 11 women were temporary migrants and of these, five were students, five were tourists, and one was a secondary applicant. Six were dependent migrants; four held partner visas and two held prospective marriage visas. One woman was a permanent resident but believed her status was dependent.

Data Collection

Ethics approval was obtained in 2018 to conduct both stages of this research. Once a woman made contact, a time was arranged to discuss the project. In the interest of participant safety, a screening call with a list of questions was implemented. Screening calls serve an important purpose in family violence research as they can provide an opportunity to discuss the project and nature of participation, respond to questions, share information so that women can make an informed decision about whether to take part, as well as pass on information about relevant services if required (e.g., Kyriakakis et al., 2015). All interviews were conducted in-person at a safe and private location of the woman's choosing. Women had the option to conduct the interview in English or with a female interpreter or support person present. Prior to each interview, the Participant Information Statement was discussed, and women were reminded of the nature of participation and their rights. Strategies regarding confidentiality were also discussed. Interviews were audio-recorded, and participants were asked to provide their consent to participate, which was discussed prior to the commencement of each interview. A distress protocol was also implemented. Questions focused on women's experiences in countries of origin and of migration, their initial experiences of life in Australia, as well as the nature of their experiences of violence and help-seeking. Interviews with stakeholders focused on women's experiences of violence and the challenges they encounter when seeking help from formal services. Victim-survivors were invited to opt in to a debrief following the interview and to a follow-up discussion by phone in the days after. Women were reimbursed with a gift voucher for their time and as an acknowledgment of their contribution to the research.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used and involved becoming familiar with the data; developing an initial list of codes; searching for, reviewing, and defining key themes; and writing

up the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Two rounds of coding were undertaken on each data set using NVivo software. A thematic map was generated to highlight provisional findings. Findings relating to the theme of “precarity” and its intersections with men’s use of violence, abuse, and coercive control are discussed in the next part of the article.

Findings: Migrant Precarity and Family Violence

Legal Precarity

The first and most pervasive component of precarity women described was legal precarity, which refers to the uncertainties that stem from a migrant women’s right to remain in Australia. While feminist migration scholars have indicated that more women are now migrating as primary applicants across a range of visa categories (e.g., Marchetti, 2018), victim-survivors in the current study were overwhelmingly represented as dependents on specific visas, such as partner visas, or held other temporary visas that do not have a pathway to permanence. The insecurities associated with women’s status provided opportunities for perpetrators to use coercive and controlling tactics to threaten, regulate, isolate, exploit, and micromanage them and their children. This reduced the degree of control women were able to exert over their lives, including their ability to pursue the goals associated with migration.

Unlike women on temporary visas (e.g., students, tourists, secondary applicants), some women with dependent migration status (e.g., partner visa holders) had more rights and entitlements in the form of unlimited work rights and access to public healthcare and some settlement support.³ Despite this, stakeholders discussed how women continue to be disadvantaged by sponsorship practices. A community lawyer expressed that while she has supported some women on skilled or business visas, the majority are on partner visas. In her view, the structure of the visa program creates an imbalance of power, and while partner visas do necessarily *cause* violence, they “allow an environment for it to get very out of hand.” She explained that women can become dependent on a partner for housing, income, and healthcare and: “by virtue of all of [these] vulnerabilities and isolating factors, they often become dependent on their partner for information.”

This was echoed by victim-survivors on partner visas who described how misinformation was used to control them and that this formed part of a broader strategy to instill fear and enforce dependence (see Anitha, 2011). Mei, for example, explained that her partner would remind her that if the couple was to get divorced, she would lose custody of her child as she did not have a job. This was made worse by the ways that male partners asserted control over the visa application process, which meant that they were able to restrict access to information about rights and entitlements. Women on partner visas also reported that men made threats to send them back to countries of origin, to have them deported, or to not sponsor them. These threats, which Segrave et al. (2021) characterize as “migration-related controlling behaviours,” formed part of a pattern of coercive control, which limited women’s confidence about their rights in Australia

(see Segrave et al., 2021) and heightened their sense of insecurity (see Parson & Heckert, 2014). In some instances, these threats were explicit and enacted, for example, via threats of deportation. Gayathri was on a partner visa, and described the ways that the rules surrounding her visa provided opportunities for her husband to gain momentum in power and control: “One of the bad things is that they already know the visa we are holding, and they have 100% rights to withdraw that visa any time ... they are using that and threatening the women, ‘if you do this, I will cancel you,’ ‘if you do this, you will go back.’” Perpetrators exploited the uncertainties related to women’s status in other ways that threatened their beliefs about and commitment to marriage. Migration provided a way for Riya to marry, which she described as an important life goal. Riya reflected on how her legal dependence on her husband enabled him to manipulate and threaten her:

Apart from throwing me out of Australia – the visa part of it – he would get into my face saying that if he doesn’t [put in the paperwork for] the appropriate visa, I’ll be out of the marital life. Getting me out of the marital life means he won’t keep me in Australia and, of course, that is in direct breakage of marriage.

Tammy, who initially moved to Australia as a student, met and married her partner after a few years, which saw her transition onto a prospective marriage visa. Her husband’s coercive and controlling tactics were less explicit. She explained that he was aware that returning home to her family would be a source of shame and that because she saw herself as having limited options, he knew she would find ways to cope with his abuse. Tammy described how her husband’s control intensified over time and intersected with other forms of abuse as she was denied access to money and other items that were necessary for daily living and survival (e.g., food and nappies for her child).

Legal precarity also impacted the lives of women with temporary migration status. Cristina, an international student, was in a long-distance relationship with an Australian man she met online. After arriving in Melbourne, the couple moved in together. Cristina explained:

There was a time that I stopped studying ‘cos I failed my first semester, so I got disheartened because my tuition fee is extremely expensive. ... I remember it was like \$34,000 a year for international students and then I have to pay like \$68,000 for two years. It was my parents who were paying but ... my parents only agreed to pay for my tuition, I had to pay for everything else. ... I didn’t have a job and I just remembered crying ‘cos it took me a while to find a job because I didn’t have Australian experience, so employers didn’t want to hire me. So yeah, so basically, I had no money of my own.

It was during this time that Cristina’s partner became increasingly controlling, monitoring her daily movements by checking her phone and refusing to let her leave the house without him. Cristina also described the ways that he used her migration status against her, threatening to report her to immigration authorities after she failed courses at university and her visa lapsed: “I couldn’t transfer [to another

course or university] immediately because it was the middle of semester already ... so, I was sort of illegal and he threatened to report me because I was illegal or wasn't holding a visa then." Cristina explained that: "whenever we had a fight ... he would just remind me of the situation like at random times, 'I'm the only one who can help you' – things like that." She also became worried that: "any time I did something that would upset him like he might just go ahead and report me or something."⁴

Victim-survivors also reflected on the process of relocating to Australia and the stressors of living with insecure migration status. Legal precarity was heightened in situations where both a woman and her male partner lacked a more secure form of status and were seeking to transition onto a permanent visa in the future. Maryam, for example, explained that because of her husband's economic abuse, she did not have the resources to pay for her student visa renewal. This, in addition to her temporary status, meant that his threats to return the family home to the country of origin carried significant weight. At one point during her stay, she explained that the family was at risk of being put into immigration detention and that she had to "beg" her husband for money to renew their visas. This reinforces the complex ways in which the insecurities associated with women's status "offers the perpetrator significant leverage for control" in the relationship (Segrave, 2018, p. 136) even in instances where the perpetrator's status is also temporary. Maryam countered her husband's acts of control by working outside the home and saving money to support her children. While this lessened its impacts, she also became cut off socially because of the ways she was forced to balance multiple jobs, study commitments, and care responsibilities.

Where there was a lack of control over the couple's migration status situation, women described how perpetrators engaged in a range of tactics to control them. In some situations, this involved regulating women's everyday interactions and activities (e.g., by limiting their contact with other people, controlling how frequently they worked, and/or controlling women's finances to restrict their freedoms). Jayani, for example, was on a student visa and added her husband to her application so he could migrate. They both commenced casual work as cleaners within the first few days of arrival to pay back a loan to her in-laws who supported them to move. Jayani's husband and his extended family monitored her closely, criticizing her for taking a day off work or for missing classes. She explained that there was a lot of pressure on her to pass her course, which the family hoped would help her qualify for a skilled visa. Jayani explained that the control intensified following the move and that she struggled to balance work alongside her study requirements. While Jayani's husband had exhibited controlling behaviors in the country of origin, his control intensified after migration, which was compounded by his family's involvement. He also became physically violent once Jayani discovered that she was pregnant:

My husband doesn't want me to deliver my baby and he just saying, "at this age we [shouldn't] have any babies." We argue with each other, and we didn't tell anyone about that because we are new to here – he doesn't know anything, we didn't know anything. He researched some – he, not me – searched some website for some abortion clinic

and we could find some places, but that's very expensive. We don't have much money because his brother spent a lot of money for us to be here and he give that money as a loan, we want to pay it back and we don't have money.

Jayani explained that she did not want to go through with an abortion and that during this time, her husband's physical violence continued to escalate. As they were both working for the same employer, Jayani had few opportunities to speak with other colleagues and explained that her husband also controlled her workload, forcing her to take on his work during the day and using violence to coerce her. Like other women, Jayani was forced to take on more work than she could manage, and she explained that her husband used physical violence to try to bring on a miscarriage.

Women's accounts indicate that those who migrate with a more secure form of status can also be vulnerable to legal precarity (see Segrave, 2018; Segrave et al., 2021). Ananya traveled to Australia on a skilled visa as a secondary applicant and was a permanent resident on arrival to the country. The experience of violence began prior to the move and soon escalated after she arrived with her young child. Ananya was deliberately isolated, prevented from working outside the home, forced to assume responsibility for all domestic labor, and physically and psychologically abused. Her husband also used the "language" of visa sponsorship against her, which was another way to ensure she was dependent on him:

The problem was that I was a – I am a permanent resident but for me citizenship is important, and he keep saying I need to stay with him for three years. It is important for me because I am with my daughter, and he have a gambling issue ... he hides it from me ... [my husband] said to me "you are my servant. I just can't take you here and you are not even doing the housework – just get lost, you not get citizenship – you are my spouse." So, he just manipulate me. Nothing is true and even I don't know that because I feel that I wasn't permanent so I not get any support from here.

It is significant that in Ananya's experience, the granting of a permanent visa did not enhance her sense of security as her husband was able to capitalize on his knowledge of the migration system and Ananya's isolation, which also contributed to social precarity.

Social Precarity

Social precarity relates to women's experiences of belonging to society. Women's accounts highlight that the conditional nature of their status in Australia can intersect with social isolation and dependency to create unique opportunities for control. When reflecting on their experiences of migration, many women expressed a sense of loneliness and detachment, which was compounded by their separation from family. This impacted their sense of belonging in different ways. Cristina explained that her experience of being alone and feeling like an outsider stemmed from the fact that she was

newly arrived and had few social networks. She also had to work long hours to support herself: "I didn't know anyone, and I had no friends and I also had trouble making friends here at first because the culture is different." Her partner was able to capitalize on her isolation from family and friends, micromanaging her everyday life by refusing to let her take public transport and accompanying her everywhere she went. Fatima who was holding a partner visa also arrived with limited social networks. She described how her husband's control tactics instilled a sense of omnipresence, which enabled him to "establish exclusive possession" of her time (Stark, 2017, p. 23):

It's actually so hard when you come here, [there is] no-one here. At the time my husband take this advantage from me ... no-one to talk to and I was also not sharing with my family because they are so far. Even [when] I am to talk with the interpreter ... he was always with me so I can't share anything. If I need something to say to my doctor or anyone I can't because he's always with me.

Like Fatima, women described how they were deliberately cut off from sources of support and that this was used to reduce their sense of belonging and autonomy. Women also explained that the move to Australia limited the social ties they were able to draw on for support, which is known to operate as a form of "social control" over perpetrators (Abraham, 2000b, p. 228). While family and friends can play a key role in helping women establish a sense of social connectedness, the migration context "reduces the potential restraints of cultural and familial mechanisms of social control on an aggressive husband" who is not accountable to a woman's family in the same way following the move (Abraham, 2000b, p. 228). This is compounded in situations where women are particularly dependent on a spouse or partner owing to a lack of resources. As in Abraham's (2000b) study, social isolation heightened the ways that victim-survivors were dependent on male partners. Leila, for example, arrived on an offshore partner visa and described how she was deliberately cut off from her family after relocating to Australia. Like other women, this coincided with an escalation in her husband's use of physical violence and verbal abuse. This was made worse by the involvement of her in-laws who prevented her from making friends and ensured she was unaware of the rules surrounding her migration status, including her eligibility for the Family Violence Provisions.

Some women explained that their experiences of family violence began prior to migrating while others experienced violence for the first time in Australia. Victim-survivors who experienced violence before the move explained that its continuation in Australia contributed to their isolation and sense of disconnection to place. This was exacerbated in situations where a woman's right to remain in Australia was dependent on an intimate partner or where the perpetrator had made threats to send the family back to countries of origin. Sahar, who was an applicant on her husband's student visa, explained that returning home was not a practical option and would have significant social and economic consequences. She had lived in Australia for nearly a decade and in spite of her husband's violence, had worked multiple casual jobs to provide for herself and her children. Despite her postgraduate

qualifications, she was unable to transition onto a different visa and explained that she had few options outside of the relationship. Sahar recounted that she felt “stuck” owing to her lack of social connections in Australia and her fears about being forced to return home. Gayathri, who was on a partner visa, had a similar reflection on her experience of belonging. She stated that her husband’s violence escalated after the move to Melbourne and described the situation she was in:

I can go back [to country of origin] if I’m coming and visiting ... but I got married, everyone know I got married and I coming here, if I go back single again to my country they will ask, “where is husband, why you come back?” But they are never going to point out to husband [who] did this, they always point out me as a woman, they will tell you, you did something wrong. Then I can’t stay ... I can’t live inside my country.

These accounts highlight the transnational implications that exist for some migrant women experiencing violence, which can impact their sense of belonging following the move to Australia, as well as their ability to return to their lives and families in other countries. Women also explained that they feared being separated from their children or being forced to return to countries of origin against their will, which provided additional “leverage” for control in Australia (Segrave, 2017, 2018).

Stakeholders described how experiences of racism and being culturally “different” can work against women, further contributing to their sense of isolation. This intersected with legal precarity, which contributed to the feeling of being “othered.” As Gayathri explained: “We are not coming here with a lie; we are coming married. ... Why they want to put us in that waiting period for so long? ... we are not women coming here just to stay here and get PR we are coming here to start our new life.” The accounts of women such as Gayathri highlight how the experience of life in Australia was influenced by women’s lack of citizenship, which, as Ellermann (2020, p. 3) describes, is an exercise in “boundary drawing.” These bordering practices influenced women’s sense of belonging and provided opportunities for perpetrators to regulate and deprive them of the resources they needed to control their lives, which was also impacted by economic precarity.

Economic Precarity

The third component of precarity women described is economic. This refers to their extent of access to public goods and services, including social security and welfare, which is often contingent and uncertain. Economic precarity intersects with legal precarity in specific ways to define the nature of migrant women’s participation in the labor market. Most women explained that they experienced a loss of social status and/or had financial difficulties after arriving in Australia, which exacerbated the effects of their insecure migration status in different ways. Their accounts also suggest that economic precarity intersects with social precarity to heighten dependence, which can undermine women’s experiences of freedom by limiting their resources and creating additional opportunities for control.

The economic interdependency that exists within families (see Sokoloff, 2008) was heightened by the pressures of living without the security of permanent residency or formal citizenship status. Stakeholders explained that in their experience, women tended to be disadvantaged due to the nature of patriarchal arrangements in the home. Their accounts also indicate that economic precarity is unevenly distributed, with women on specific visas being particularly susceptible. Support workers at family violence services explained that temporary migrants on skilled work visas may be in a more advantageous position than women on other temporary visas (e.g., students) as they are more likely to have an income, recognized skills, and proficiency in English. This may increase the options that are available to them in situations where a partner is abusive. Despite this, they also explained that in practice, women's control over or access to income can be reduced because of the pooling of financial resources within families. The circumstances differ again for women who are secondary applicants:

Their needs will differ slightly ... if she is the dependent spouse and not working, then that is going to be more challenging, if she is working then it's slightly easier. But at the end of the day, they are not eligible for any concessions and the children, if they go to school, they have to pay international fees, so you're likely to see them very reluctant to leave the relationship because they need both incomes to sustain it. (Victim support worker, family violence service, Melbourne)

Most stakeholders also indicated that students can be vulnerable due to visa conditions that restrict work rights and access to services. A manager of a family violence service explained that women can be disadvantaged by the financial burden of being a student, which requires them to pay for private healthcare, their education, and any costs associated with raising children. Not only is this known to push students into precarious employment, but they may also be vulnerable to sexual harassment and exploitation in the workforce, which is compounded in instances where they are also suffering family violence at home (see Villegas, 2019).

The pressures associated with insecure migration status and the "ongoing work" (Goldring & Landolt, 2013, p. 4) migrants need to perform to retain their status can also create unique situations of interdependency in intimate relationships. Stakeholders, as well as victim-survivors, explained that in Australia, women may become dependent on a partner for income or housing even if they are the primary visa holder:

We've had incidences where the woman is on a student visa and the husband comes on the spouse visa as a student, but he's allowed to work so she's still dependent on his income. ... she has to study full-time and so he works but then he – although he is dependent on her visa – he still has the upper hand so that when domestic violence starts, although she has that stronghold because of the visa, she's dependent on him financially because without his finances she can't finish her studies. (Victim support worker, family violence service, Melbourne)

Women described how these situations of dependency created opportunities for their partners to control them financially (e.g., by limiting women's access to bank

accounts, taking their salary from them, and/or not sharing their own salary). Victim-survivors who had migrated on student visas with their families discussed the pressures associated with retaining their status, while also balancing work and family commitments without a viable safety net. This was heightened in times of transition where women were moving across visas and were placed on bridging visas, which, in some instances, limited their work rights (see Vaughan et al., 2016). Maryam reflected:

I rented the house, paid the bond, paid the rent, bills, groceries, my own school fees and, you know, when you are on a visa, you have to pay for health insurance ... my son's school fees – and I was only doing a weekend job – and I had some savings ... When the savings finished, I started to get very depressed and worried – what am I going to do now?

Maryam's experience of economic precarity intersected with her husband's economic control and emotional abuse, which was made worse by his threats to return the family to the country of origin. Maryam explained how her husband exploited her productive and reproductive labor by refusing to share his salary and that this contributed to neglect, preventing her from doing what she needed to care for herself. While having access to their own income at different times following the move reduced the ways that women such as Maryam were dependent on a partner, they also ran the risk of being forced into more precarious forms of work, including cash jobs with irregular hours and unsafe working conditions. Maryam described the considerable impact of her situation on her health and well-being. She recounted that there were "too many burdens – psychologically, emotionally, and physically" and explained: "I hurt my back. I was working day and night. He didn't pay the rent during that time. I stayed at home I think for two months ... and then I had to go back [to work]." These accounts highlight that the experience of economic precarity is impacted by gender inequality and financial interdependency; the ways that men restricted women's access to income or took advantage of their domestic labor, as well as the limited social safety net they had access to. Women countered men's violence by drawing on different strategies, such as working outside the home, seeking out information about their rights, keeping their money separate, and changing passwords to bank accounts. Despite this, many women struggled to find work in their respective fields despite their tertiary qualifications, and although some managed to secure casual work, their efforts to exert control over their situation were impacted by factors, such as their limited entitlements and precarious employment.

Discussion: Precarity, Violence, and "Entrapment"

Victim-survivor and stakeholder accounts draw attention to the different ways legal, social, and economic precarity intersect to shape women's subjective experiences of (in)security following the move to Australia. These different components of precarity had implications for women's safety and created opportunities for male perpetrators

and other family members to exercise power and control over them. The precarity associated with women's status not only limited the options that were available to them, but also worked to "entrap" victim-survivors in violent relationships, exacerbating their deportability, undermining their sense of belonging, and heightening their economic insecurity. Stark's (2017, p. 24) conceptualization of "entrapment" refers to the "subjective experience of coercive control" that is akin to a "hostage-like" situation. Entrapment is used to describe the "multiple and cumulative" effects of men's violence and is also a "condition of unfreedom" that involves "instilling fear" and is the product of perpetrator efforts to deny a victim-survivor their agency (Stark, 2007, pp. 298, 368, 369).

Women's accounts highlight the complex ways that their impermanent status was used against them (see Anitha, 2011; Chiu, 2017; Segrave, 2018). There were commonalities in women's experiences; students, for example, described how their limited work rights provided leverage for economic control, and partner migrants detailed how they were threatened with the withdrawal of sponsorship. However, it is also significant that the women in the present study did not necessarily conform to a similar picture of disadvantage. While women's accounts highlight the influence of insecure migration status on the dynamics of family violence, their experiences were also shaped by the ways that this status intersected with other social inequalities. This produced a range of constraints that made everyday life more difficult and had the potential to endanger women who had limited options, including victim-survivors who became undocumented due to migration-related abuse (i.e., sponsorship being withdrawn, or paperwork not being lodged by the perpetrator) and/or who were fearful of returning home due to safety concerns. These findings support Segrave's (2018, p. 127) research, which draws attention to "the ways in which migration status is a further component of the complexity of gendered violence." Despite significant challenges, women in the present study resisted the conditions of their impermanent status and worked to counter the effects of family violence with different strategies, which had differing degrees of success. These expressions of agency were dependent on women's individual circumstances and were influenced by a range of intersecting factors, such as care responsibilities, issues getting qualifications recognized, language barriers, social support, time spent out of the workforce, costs associated with transitioning onto different visas, and the structure of the migration system more broadly, which prioritizes skills in ways that are known to exclude women (Boucher, 2016).

While women negotiated everyday life as safely as they could, the contingency surrounding their migration status provided opportunities for perpetrators to exploit their structural vulnerabilities, which put them at risk of further violence in Australia. Victim-survivors and stakeholders described how men and other family members made implicit and explicit threats regarding their migration status, which undermined their sense of safety and security. Bhuyan and Bragg (2019) have argued that perpetrator tactics of this kind operate as a form of violence that functions to silence or maintain control over a victim-survivor and limit their options. Segrave (2018, p. 126) also points out that it is within this context that the state can be seen to participate in

men's violence as policies "restrict and limit women," which in turn "empowers perpetrators." Many migrant women in the present study were also impacted by the ways that their limited rights intersected with sexism across "transnational terrains" (Mahler & Pessar, 2001, p. 445), which perpetrators in Australia and in countries of origin used to exacerbate their *deportability* (De Genova, 2002; see also Segrave, 2021).

Violence and control also heightened women's subjective experiences of precarity. Migration policies, including sponsorship practices, and other rules that "tie" a woman's right to remain in Australia to her relationship (Sokoloff, 2008), construct women as "social actors" who—while physically present—are "less than full members of society" (Fraser, 2000, p. 115). Some women explained that they were sent back to their countries of origin by deception while other perpetrators made arrangements to sponsor a different partner while a couple was still together. Women's lives were defined by the absence of "spatial and temporal control" (Hennebry, 2014, p. 47) and some described the ways that perpetrator tactics put them at risk of not meeting their visa conditions. While many of these acts are enabled by the ways that women's status is temporary or contingent on ongoing sponsorship from the perpetrator, men's controlling behaviors also have the potential to make women believe their status is less secure than it is in practice.

Women's accounts also demonstrate how the impermanence of their status enabled perpetrator tactics that contributed to their loneliness, isolation, and sense of alienation following the move. While alienation has been described as a subjective consequence of non-citizenship (e.g., Roseneil, 2013), some women discussed how the experience of violence also made them question their attachment to their place of birth. Social precarity was heightened in situations where women felt a sense of being "in between"—not belonging in Australia and no longer belonging to family in their country of origin. Findings indicate that while many women saw immediate and extended family in Australia and in other countries as important sources of support, others felt constrained by the cultural and religious beliefs held by some in their family and/or community. This supports Vaughan et al.'s (2016) findings about the impact of cultural norms on women's experiences of violence, which in their study differed across families and among older and younger generations. While women in the present study navigated expectations around gender and marriage in different ways, the effects of men's control were heightened in situations where they had limited family support.

Many victim-survivors also explained that they lacked the economic resources that would enable them to make decisions about their future. Most women were concerned about how they would be able to financially support themselves and their children outside of the relationship. This was made worse by their exclusion from access to government support (Bhuyan, 2012) as well as the precarious nature of their employment (Villegas, 2019). Women's accounts also suggest that they were constrained by their migration status in different ways, and that the effects of this were heightened in situations where leaving a violent partner would have resulted in them being forced to leave the country irrespective of the time they had spent living in the community or the residency status of their children (Segrave, 2018). Their accounts also show that they were disadvantaged by their efforts to establish a future for themselves in

Australia. Most gave up their jobs, visas in other countries, and meaningful social relationships to move, investing their time and resources into the goal of permanent resettlement despite the conditional nature of their status (see Vaughan et al., 2016). Thus, while existing feminist research has shown that women can achieve gains in gender equity as a result of migration (e.g., Pratt & Yeoh, 2003), findings from the present study indicate that these changes are far more complex and uneven in practice (see Vaughan et al., 2015).

Conclusion

The present study has sought to contribute to knowledge about the influence of structural factors such as migration policies on the dynamics of family violence and the risks women negotiate in their daily lives as non-citizens. A structural approach assists to contextualize women's decision-making and the circumstances that make them vulnerable (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). It also challenges what Volpp (2001) has described as a tendency to focus on cultural practices that subordinate women from marginalized backgrounds in research on violence, which has been shown to contribute to the ways they are represented in policy responses (Murdolo & Quiazon, 2015).

While recent policy-level efforts to end family violence discuss the importance of reducing barriers for all victim-survivors who reside in Australia, further recognition of the ways state policies influence migrant women's experiences is critically needed (see Segrave, 2017, 2021; Vaughan et al., 2016). Findings from the present study suggest that this involves accounting for the different forms of precarity migrant women are exposed to in their daily lives in Australia, and how precarity limits their options in family violence situations. As victim-survivor and stakeholder accounts show, the precarity associated with women's status influenced not only their vulnerability to family violence—including the risk of ongoing violence—but also their vulnerability to further legal, social, and economic precarity in Australia and in transnational contexts. While there is a tendency in existing Australian policy documents to acknowledge the vulnerability of migrants such as sponsored partners, findings from the present study reinforce that women with insecure migration status are a heterogeneous cohort. Women also described how their experiences changed as they moved across visas, which afforded them differing degrees of security over time. This points to the complexity of "migration status," which encompasses different *statuses* and configurations of *rights* and intersects with other aspects of social difference in addition to gender, such as ethnicity and class, to shape women's experiences. Moreover, while existing research on migrant precarity has tended to focus on how certain groups of migrants such as asylum seekers are vulnerable to forms of structural oppression, harm, and injustice, the present study draws attention to the diverse ways that precarity impacts the lives of migrant women with a range of impermanent statuses. It also supports existing findings in the multicultural literature on family violence, which highlights the need to account for how the politics of immigration control and its intersections with sexism, racism, and neoliberalism can disadvantage

women, and heighten their vulnerability to violence following the move to Western multicultural societies such as Australia (Anitha, 2011; Jayasuriya-Illesinghe, 2018).

There are important policy and practice implications that arise from this research. Structural change is required to address the ways that state policies influence the dynamics of violence and the options that are available to migrant women. Much can be drawn from recommendations that have been made by successive inquiries in Australia for over a decade. In its landmark report, the ALRC (2011) made a case for expanding the Family Violence Provisions so that they are accessible to a broader cohort of visa holders, including those on prospective marriage visas who have not yet married a sponsor, and secondary applicants on skilled visas, which are associated with a pathway to permanence. Stakeholders have also recommended that a new temporary visa be introduced as a mechanism to ensure that those who sit outside the scope of the Family Violence Provisions can seek help in Australia, have access to the support they need (e.g., legal, financial, housing, and healthcare), and are not forced to return home because their situation changed after experiencing violence (ALRC, 2011; National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence, 2019). Findings from the present study indicate that efforts could also be taken to ensure that women who are eligible for partner visas but have been forced to arrive on less secure visas (e.g., as tourists), or have become undocumented due to family violence, are also able to transition their status and access support.

Since the implementation of the first National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children in 2010, emphasis has been placed on the importance of cross-cultural training to ensure that those working across the family violence and criminal justice systems are responsive to the needs of victim-survivors from different cultural backgrounds. Stakeholders in the present study highlighted that systemic change is required to ensure the representation of migrant women across the family violence system. Steps also need to be taken to address existing processes for getting women's qualifications recognized. Establishing specific pathways for women with lived experience to enter the sector is another important step in valuing migrant women's diverse expertise. Participants in the study also emphasized that further effort needs to be taken to ensure that migrant women are aware of the rights associated with their visa/s prior to and following their arrival in Australia and where to go for help. Findings support recent research which highlights the role that settlement services, faith settings, and workplaces can play in early intervention (Hach & Aryal-Lees, 2019; Vaughan, Chen et al., 2020, Vaughan, Sullivan, et al., 2020). This could also extend to universities. Efforts could also be made to support existing community-based initiatives that seek to reduce the social isolation of migrant women on specific visas, such as partner migrants, students, and skilled migrants residing in regional areas. Importantly, decisions that impact women's safety need to be developed in consultation with experts to ensure that any changes will enable women experiencing violence to seek help without running the very real risk of losing their status or being separated from their children (Segrave, 2018).

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Notes

1. I use the term “family violence” because it is the preferred term in the Australian context. In Victoria, family violence is defined to include behaviors between family members that are physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, and economically abusive, threatening, or coercive (*Family Violence Protection Act 2008* [Vic], s. 5).
2. The focus in this study was on the experiences of women who arrived on a range of visas and for different reasons (e.g., to reunite or live with a partner, to work, or to study). I took the view that migrants who arrive for humanitarian reasons are faced with specific issues in Australia that distinguish their experiences from migrants who arrive under the planned and temporary migration programs. Despite this, I recognize that those who arrive under voluntary migration schemes do not always do so by choice, and that women’s reasons for migration are complex and change over time, including as a result of violence.
3. Partner visas are associated with a pathway to permanence and if a relationship breaks down because of violence, dependent partners can apply for permanent residency by accessing the Family Violence Provisions. In contrast, temporary migrants are ineligible for all social safety nets, including welfare and other services (e.g., social security payments and concessions, housing, and settlement support, including language classes, and any support for children). They must also pay privately for healthcare, education, and legal or migration support, and the visa they hold may restrict access to the labor market. Bridging visa

holders are also generally unable to access public benefits or services and may not be granted work rights, while undocumented migrants are at risk of removal or detention and have no access to government supports.

4. This example highlights how falling out of status can be “leveraged” (Segrave, 2017) by perpetrators of family violence. In drawing attention to this example, I recognise the importance of examining the specific experiences of women who are undocumented and experience family violence, and that this issue has been explored by scholars in contexts such as the United States (e.g., Parson et al., 2016). In this article I am unable to explore this further in part because although the experience of becoming undocumented was raised by Cristina, the issue was resolved relatively quickly (i.e., she was able to successfully transition her status) and as such wasn’t a focus of deep exploration in the interview or in other interviews.”

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